

# Skinner Butte Park

*master plan*

2001







# SKINNER BUTTE PARK MASTER PLAN

City of Eugene  
Parks and Open Space Division

Prepared by:  
Robin Alan Hostick, Landscape Architect  
City of Eugene Parks Planning

January 2002



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Skinner Butte Park Master Plan was developed and produced by the City of Eugene Parks Planning office. We would like to sincerely thank the hundreds of community members who gave their time and shared their ideas, without whom this would not have been possible. It is a testament to the strength of our community, and a demonstration of a long-term commitment to continually adapt, expand and improve Eugene's Parks and Open Space system.

## **Key Citizen Participants**

Charles Biggs	Jim Grimes	Pat J. Leonard	Patrick Quinn
Carl A. Blood	Rob Handy	Rhoda Love	Becky Riley
Dorothy Blood	Catherine Heising	Dennis Lueck	Jake Risley
Beth Bridges	Allan Hesch	Larry Lynch	Mike Robinson
Greg Brokaw	Laura Hisrich	Charlie Magee	Anastasia Sandow
Catrina Bull	Paul Hoobyar	Nancy McDowell	Jan Spencer
Tyler Burgess	Wayne Irvin	Kate McGee	Forest Spirit
Glenn Campbell	Louranah Janeski	Allison Mickel	Rand Stamm
Doug Card	Stacey Janssen	Tom Mickel	Esther Stutzman
Joan Connolly	K. Januszewski	Geni Morrow	Mareen Twomey
Don DeWitt	George Jette	Stewart Mulford	Jan VanderTuin
Peter Dixon	Kevin Jones	Glenn Munro	Kathy Weiderhold
Greg Duncan	Karen Juul	Betty Murrell	Lee White
Mike Ebrot	Sue R. Kangas	Doug Nelson	Ray Wiley
Colby Eiermann	Megan Kemple	Adam Novick	Kathy Wilger
Robert Emmons	Jason C. Kidwell	Tracy Olsen	J. R. Williams PhD
John Etter	Seth Kimmel	Andy Pears	Rev. Elmer Wilson
Leslie Field	Rita Kingsbury	Kate Perle	John Wolf
Raimon Franck	Wayne Kingsbury	Dave Predeek	
Reid Freeman	Dorothy Krapes		

## **Key City of Eugene Staff**

Kurt Corey, Public Works Director	Ed Alverson, Natural Resources Specialist
Johnny Medlin, Parks and Open Space Division Manager	Rita Kingsbury, Recreation Senior Services Manager
Andrea Riner, Parks Planning Manager	Wally Wallberg, Recreation Program Supervisor
Carolyn Weiss, Parks Planner	Marilyn Kalstad, Recreation Manager Outdoor Adventure
Philip Richardson, Parks Planner	Roger Bailey, Recreation Program Supervisor
Tim Rhay, Parks Maintenance Manager	Gary McNeel, Transportation Development Manager
Trevor Taylor, Natural Resources Coordinator	Diane Bishop, Bicycle Transportation Coordinator
Jesse Cary-Hobbs, Natural Area Maintenance Supervisor	Mike Penwell, Facilities Principal Facilities Project Manager
Lorna Baldwin, Stream Team Coordinator	Meredith Cavender, Facilities Project Manager
Marcia Peeters, Volunteer Coordinator	Kathy Briner, Planning and Development Deputy Director
Mark Snyder, Urban Forester	Lew Bowers, Neighborhood, Housing and Community Development Division Manager
Matt Rivers, Urban Forestry	Mike Sullivan, Financial and Urban Services Manager
Eric Johnson, Parks Maintenance Supervisor	Ken Guzowski, Historic Preservation Program Manager
John Clark, Parks Maintenance Supervisor	Eric Wold, Natural Resources Planner
Sarah Medary, Parks Maintenance Supervisor	Ann Siegenthaler, Land Use Management Tree Permit Analyst
Houston Shepard, Parks Maintenance	
Larry Greenwood, Maintenance Supervisor	
Ed Sharek, Parks Maintenance	
Louis Kroeck, Principal Landscape Architect	
Emily Proudfoot, Landscape Architect	
Kevin Finney, Landscape Architect	
Therese Walch, Water Resource Manager	
Linda Harris, Water Resource Engineering Associate	

# CONTENTS

<b>Chapter 1: Overview &amp; Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Why a Master Plan? .....	1
Master Plan Methodology .....	6
Master Plan Highlights .....	10
Issues .....	10
Vision Statement .....	11
Goals .....	12
Strategies .....	14
Priorities .....	16
<b>Chapter 2: Natural History and Cultural Context .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Introduction .....	19
Geography .....	19
Flora and Fauna .....	20
The Kalapuya .....	24
Euro-American Settlement .....	27
A Brief History of Skinner Butte Park .....	29
<b>Chapter 3: Inventory and Assessment .....</b>	<b>37</b>
Introduction .....	37
Natural Resources .....	37
Cultural Resources .....	41
Park Facilities .....	42
Transportation and Access .....	43
Context and Surrounding Areas .....	45
<b>Chapter 4: Current use, Policy and Managemenet .....</b>	<b>47</b>
Introduction .....	47
Role and Function .....	47
Management .....	50
Current Policy and Trends .....	52
<b>Chapter 5: Skinner Butte Park Master Plan .....</b>	<b>57</b>
Park Policy Framework .....	57
Management Units .....	60
Management Unit Descriptions .....	62
Habitat Management Plan .....	69
Viewshed Management Plan .....	73
Implementation Plan .....	76
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Appendix A: Maps .....</b>	<b>79</b>

## FIGURES

<b>Figure 1:</b>	<b>Sample Concept Diagram .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Figure 2:</b>	<b>Historic Vegetation Patterns (1850) .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Figure 3:</b>	<b>Skinner Butte Summit Mowed Area .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Figure 4:</b>	<b>Vegetation Management Concept .....</b>	<b>70 - 71</b>
<b>Figure 5:</b>	<b>Trail Safety Concept .....</b>	<b>70 - 71</b>
<b>Figure 6:</b>	<b>Edge Condition Concept .....</b>	<b>70 - 71</b>
<b>Figure 7:</b>	<b>Bird Migration Overlay Zone .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Figure 8:</b>	<b>Critical Viewshed Overlay Zone .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Figure 9:</b>	<b>Sample View Threshold .....</b>	<b>75</b>

## APPENDIX A: MAPS

<b>Map 1:</b>	<b>Draft Master Plan</b>
<b>Map 2:</b>	<b>Site Features</b>
<b>Map 3:</b>	<b>Topography</b>
<b>Map 4:</b>	<b>Natural Resources</b>
<b>Map 5:</b>	<b>Visitor's Loop Vision</b>
<b>Map 6:</b>	<b>Site Context Map</b>
<b>Map 7:</b>	<b>Management Units</b>
<b>Map 8:</b>	<b>Riverbank Stabilization Concept</b>
<b>Map 9:</b>	<b>Proposed Trail System</b>
<b>Map 10:</b>	<b>Air Photo (1999)</b>

## FOREWORD

Eugene Skinner didn't settle here because he was tired of looking. On the western toe of a steep, grassy knoll, a stone's throw from the region's mightiest river and overlooking a panorama of some of the most fertile land in the west, Skinner knew he'd found his place. He described the southern end of the Willamette Valley as a nest within the surrounding green hills. It was beautiful, and it suited him.

The fact that he settled here, then, is not particularly remarkable. What is most remarkable is that some of the land that he once roamed and farmed is still open to the public, more than 150 years later, in the center of the busy, modern city that has grown up around his cabin outpost. One hundred acres of parkland, a quarter mile of river bank, a butte and myriad forests and meadows now comprise one of the most valuable public land resources in the city of Eugene.

Skinner Butte Park is, essentially, at the heart of the city. It is appropriate that Eugene, often dubbed the "Emerald City", has a heart of green. Of course this, too, is no accident. The city has remained green only by the will and care of many generations of Eugene residents. It is in the honor of this tradition that we respectfully submit this body of work to preserve and reaffirm the value of this resource for the many generations to follow.

RAH





# CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW & SUMMARY

## Why a Master Plan?

### ***Resource Without a Vision***

Skinner Butte Park, as it exists today, has never been the subject of a comprehensive public involvement and planning process. Over 30 years ago, in 1969, the last major planning effort for Skinner Butte Park was undertaken. This was mainly a visioning process involving a city-wide request for ideas and suggestions for “what to do with the butte”. Unfortunately, the focus of this effort did not encompass the entire park, and the plan lacks the element of public consensus that we now consider essential. Some plans developed prior to 1969, including drawings from the 1920s and 1930s, show a broader vision that included more of the area now considered to be Skinner Butte Park, however they still lack analysis, public involvement and consensus. One result of an absence of shared vision is that the park begins to lose its identity. Without the strength of identity, the park is much less likely to capture the attention, or the resources, that it needs to serve the community.

### ***Aging Facilities, Changing Environment***

Why do we need a vision for a major metropolitan park? What are the consequences of not having a vision? A visit to Skinner Butte Park today will quickly tell the tale of an aging infrastructure and a rapidly changing environment. Many of the processes at work in Skinner Butte Park are understood well enough, but change happens slowly and the current condition, although degraded, becomes the accepted norm.

While it is true that most infrastructure may be repaired and replaced as necessary, a repair and replacement strategy does not take into consideration changing needs in the community, shifts in use patterns, or the slow attrition of interest and vitality. As the community changes and grows, therefore, so too must the park proactively transform to keep pace and provide for the community's recreational and psychological needs.

For the park's natural areas, however, the situation is more complex and urgent. Since Euro-Americans settled the region, the vegetation patterns in the park have traveled a course of irrevocable change. The forestation of native meadows, and most importantly the extremely rapid spread of invasive plants has forced us to make a decision about how these areas will be managed. It is clear that failure to make a decision will not only result in the homogenization and extinction of many native plant and animal species within the park, but will create a new set of issues to be addressed, such as public safety and maintenance. Clearly, some action is necessary. What is required, therefore, is a template for the degree to which this natural progression of events will be allowed to continue, to be halted, or to be reversed through restoration and reclamation.

From the pre-historic use of Skinner Butte by the Kalapuya Indians as a lookout and ceremonial area, to the contemporary popularity of hiking and birding, to the necessity of providing respite from the urban condition, the natural areas of

Skinner Butte Park are a meeting ground for one of the most ubiquitous conflicts of interest of modern times: humans and nature. Clearly, as the population of the region increases, this conflict is not likely to diminish in the near future. In addition to managing certain areas of the park for their inherent natural resource values, therefore, it is also logical that there must also be some basis, some vision for managing human use of the park.

The park and its natural areas cannot be separated, nor can they be ignored as having separate needs. Balancing the responsibility of providing for the needs of the public with protecting the aspects of the park that they most value becomes a key theme that a guiding vision must address.

### **Multiple Interests**

Skinner Butte Park has been, and will continue to be, the subject of great public interest. The sheer diversity of habitats and experiences available in the park have attracted varied groups of people with different plans and goals. Without a clear vision for the park, reconciling diverse

*Entrance sign in the east end of the park near the Campbell Senior Center*



interests is likely to be accomplished through temporary measures and compromises based on the needs and desires of certain individuals and groups. In all fairness to the parties involved, decisions to resolve such competing interests are best made based on solid, publicly-supported criteria.

More importantly, perhaps, is the long-term effect of having no clear vision. Since any given proposal may affect the park profoundly for many years, it is essential for the review process to be based on a good, clear knowledge of the park's greatest values, and how a particular proposal will impact these values.

### **Bond Measure Funding**

The 1998 Parks and Open Space bond measure, on the recommendation of the bond measure committee, proposed the construction of a softball field and sand volleyball areas in the currently undeveloped west end of Skinner Butte Park. At the same time, a group of Whiteaker area residents had begun to form a grass-roots proposal to develop a historical, community farm in this same area. As the neighborhood proposal took shape and was formally submitted to the City, the disparity of interests in this area of the park became apparent.

The conflict raised a number of issues. One issue was that no plan existed for Skinner Butte Park, and, therefore, no publicly adopted criteria to guide a decision. In essence, there was no reasonable way to gauge the public support or public need between these two, mutually exclusive proposals. Furthermore, the community farm versus ball field issue was just one of many burgeoning issues and proposals related to Skinner Butte Park that would otherwise need to be evaluated and decided on an individual basis. Secondly, either proposal would be a significant, long-term commitment of a large area of public open space in a key metropolitan park. It was determined, therefore, that a decision should not be made on the basis of individual need or case arguments alone. It must be brought to the public and

***This is the first comprehensive plan for the park***

***Multiple interests require a sound decision-making framework***

discussed in a more comprehensive way in the context of the entire park. The forum must also be appropriately far-reaching to include opinions from the entire community.

Finally, how would the bond measure funding be spent with no clear rationale for priorities in the park? A thorough public process would help direct the funding to where it was needed most, and to align improvements as closely as possible with current public values as they apply to Skinner Butte Park.

### **Grant Funding**

As the debate over the development of the west end of the park illustrates, a park vision based on community consensus and support not only reduces conflict but allows a much more proactive approach to park management strategies and improvements that directly benefit the community. Without such a vision, plans may be put on hold and management strategies suspended indefinitely amid disagreement.

Not surprisingly, this is also true for funding sources. Once a master plan is established that is demonstrably supported by the community, community leaders, committee members and funding agencies feel more confident in backing a particular proposal. Not only are projects and management strategies easier to support, but a master plan is often a basic requirement for funding eligibility. This can mean the support of the public for local funding options such as bond measures, as well as the support of other federal, state and private sources. Communities that have a demonstrated need and have a demonstrated vision are in a better position to take advantage of these resources. To make the investment now in reaching out to the public and collaboratively developing a vision for the park's future has the potential to pay dividends.

***"A great park deserves a great plan, and the community deserves both." -RAH***



*Wrecked car bodies reinforce the river bank near the I-105 bridge*

### **What Purpose Does the Master Plan Serve?**

There are a variety of goals that the process of developing a master plan seeks to achieve. The following list describes in detail some of the most important of these goals.

#### **Goal 1: Create a long-term vision to guide decisions and management**

Clearly, a key purpose of the master planning process is to provide a forum for the discussion of long-term decisions regarding management and improvement of the park. The process not only focuses on discussion of current needs, but reaches up to 20 years ahead to plan for long-term change and future needs. The master planning process, therefore, is a way to collaboratively create a vision of how the park should ideally look and function over the next generation.

#### **Goal 2: Catalog and prioritize infrastructure improvement needs for future**

Over time, a large and diverse park will require the input of dozens of different individuals and organizations with widely varying interests. The master planning process provides a forum to research, discuss and list these interests and needs, from maintenance to historic interpretation, in one central document that can be used as a guide, marketing tool and work plan. Also, as an overlay of community values, the process of setting priorities helps focus



*Children playing in Skinner Butte Park*

energy and resources on the most important projects, and outlines a logical sequence of future steps towards realization of the overall vision.

### **Goal 3: Involve the public and raise awareness of this valuable resource**

With the public involvement tools available, a key goal of the master planning process is to engage the community in a detailed discussion of the park. To get people involved with the park, to ask them to take a close, hard look, to see the potential, and then to collectively record what they saw, is not simply a goal of the process, it is the process. Raising awareness carries a number of benefits for Skinner Butte Park and parks in general. Here are just a few of these benefits:

- ▶ Increasing positive, legitimate park use
- ▶ Increasing the pool of volunteer resources
- ▶ Increasing overall awareness of parks and public land resources

- ▶ Inspiring public discussion of general park issues and how to approach them
- ▶ Inspiring donations or uncovering other funding opportunities through networking
- ▶ Building a stronger community by bringing diverse segments of the community together over a common theme

***Raising awareness of the park carries a number of benefits for the park and the community***

### **Goal 4: Uncover issues and adopt policies to address them**

In the course of engaging the public and assessing their values, current issues are uncovered. The master plan is an opportunity to discuss these issues in detail, and it affords a means of developing and adopting policies that are able to address them in the most sensitive and informed way. It creates opportunities for face-to-face discussions with stakeholder groups, and at the same time allows the meaningful incorporation of the opinions of the broader community.

### **Goal 5: Realign mission of parks to match needs and values of the community**

Ideally, parks reflect the character of the surrounding neighborhood and community. Keeping step with the needs and values of the people that shape that character cannot be done without engaging the community in a sincere and proactive manner. Although the values of the community as a whole can often be seen as a thread throughout the parks system, it is a challenge to assess the overall values of the entire community around a particular park. This is especially true for a resource as unique and diverse as Skinner Butte Park. Therefore, an up-to-date measure of the community's needs and values is needed to incorporate them directly into the mission of the park. It provides clear steps for bringing people's overall values and park values into alignment.



**A clear plan opens  
the door for many  
funding opportunities**

### **How will the master plan be used?**

The master plan document itself is intended to serve a number of functions. These are some of the most important of these functions:

- ▶ Handbook for implementing an updated vision for the park
- ▶ Work plan for the prioritized improvements
- ▶ Criteria for specific work plan projects
- ▶ Policy framework for decisions affecting the park
- ▶ Resource management strategy
- ▶ Direction for bond measure funding
- ▶ Planning framework to pursue other funding
- ▶ Tool to raise public awareness

### **How long is the master plan valid?**

The master plan represents a vision for the park over the next generation, or approximately 20 years. The objective is that this vision will be substantially realized at some point within that time period. In a more pragmatic sense, the plan will remain valid as long as its policies remain consistent with the needs and values of the public. As attitudes shift, certain aspects of the plan may come to the forefront, and other aspects may become less important.

*Local residents overlook the Willamette River and Whiteaker area from the west end of Skinner Butte circa 1890. Note the cluster of family farms along the river's edge.*



# Master Plan Methodology

## Approach

The master planning process for Skinner Butte Park involved careful integration of research and public involvement to develop a thorough, objective plan firmly rooted in current, broad-base community values. Dozens of stakeholder groups and individuals were involved in its development at every level through a format aimed at involvement on a number of levels to reflect a cross-section of the community that the park serves.

## Research

Extensive research was carried out for historical aspects and current conditions of the park. City archives, the Lane County Historical Society, the University of Oregon Landscape Architecture Department, oral histories, interviews, and on-site evaluations contributed to the body of information contained in this master plan.

"The columns" public climbing area



## Public Workshops

City of Eugene Parks Planning staff hosted a series of three public workshops at the Campbell Senior Center between April 2000 and June 2001, drawing over 120 participants. The first workshop was an all-day event including a presentation of the history and current status of Skinner Butte Park, a walking tour and evaluation, and a group discussion of issues and opportunities within the park. The second workshop focused on reviewing a draft vision statement, policy goals and strategies for the master plan, and two rounds of group discussions to review concept diagrams of key issues and opportunities (see Figure 1). The third workshop involved general discussion of the draft master plan drawing, a revised vision statement and goals, and a comprehensive list of master plan strategies and actions. Participants at the third workshop also helped set priorities for project implementation.

## Survey and Comment Stations

As the first step in seeking the broad-base community input required for the planning of a metropolitan park, Advanced Marketing Research, Inc. was hired to implement and analyze a citywide, random-sample survey on general park issues and questions directly related to Skinner Butte Park. With 2,500 forms mailed, the survey received a good response, and the demographics of the respondents were determined to be a good reflection of the broader Eugene community. Information gathered from this survey helped inform the planning process, and was also presented for discussion at the second public workshop (see Summary of Citywide Survey Results on facing page).

The second step in broad-base community outreach involved the placement of five self-service comment stations with large, color displays of the Draft Master Plan drawing in prominent public locations around the city. These locations included the downtown LTD bus station, the 5<sup>th</sup> Street Market, Amazon Community Center, Sheldon Community Center and Echo Hollow Pool. A total of 92 comment sheets

(continued on Page 8)



### Figure 1: Sample Concept Diagram

*This is a sample of a concept diagram used for discussion and brainstorming at the second public workshop. This diagram illustrates ideas and issues raised at the first workshop dealing with one key aspect of the park: natural areas and habitat restoration.*



## Survey Says . . . Summary of Citywide Survey Results

### General

- ▶ Most people list leisure and relaxation as their main reason for visiting Skinner Butte Park, followed by exercise and nature.
- ▶ The most frequently used amenities in Skinner Butte Park are the bike path, parking areas, and the butte viewpoint.
- ▶ The playground is used by nearly half of all visitors to Skinner Butte Park.
- ▶ Amenities that people feel would most improve the experience in Skinner Butte Park are drinking fountains, walking trails and natural areas.
- ▶ Almost everyone feels it is important to convey local history in Skinner Butte Park.

### Circulation and Access

- ▶ Most people arrive at Skinner Butte Park by car.
- ▶ About 90% of the respondents listed the bike path as their most frequently visited area of the park.
- ▶ Most people thought that High Street should be the main entrance to the park.
- ▶ Most people support opening the connection under I-105 to Owen Rose Garden for bikes and pedestrians.

### Natural Areas

- ▶ Most people feel that Eugene's parks currently have a good balance between natural resources and recreation.
- ▶ People's highest priority for improvement efforts focused on protecting and enhancing natural areas and river bank areas.
- ▶ Eugene residents support river bank stabilization and habitat improvements even if it means removing portions of lawn areas, but less so if it means removing mature trees and replacing them with new ones.
- ▶ Most residents favor a moderate approach to balancing preservation of views from the top of the butte with preservation of existing trees, whereby some thinning and tree removal to preserve or partially restore views would be acceptable.

**Eugene Parks are currently well balanced between recreation and natural areas**

were filled out and deposited in comment boxes at all locations. On a scale of one to ten, participants were encouraged to rate their support for the master plan (10 = high support, 1 = low support). The average level of support for the Draft Master Plan among respondents was 8.5 out of 10. Respondents were also asked whether or not they felt the draft master plan met their needs. Over 80% of the respondents replied YES, the draft master plan met their needs.

### **Advertisement**

Advertisement for public involvement efforts included direct-mail postcard invitations to over 3000 neighbors, individuals and stakeholder organizations, display ads in the Register-Guard and Eugene Weekly, news releases, personal contact and interviews with over 50 stakeholder organizations and individuals, and listing on the City public meetings

calendar. Many steps of the process were covered by local newspapers, television stations and radio stations. A special web page was also created on the City of Eugene web site to allow 24-hour access to information related to the planning process (see [www.ci.eugene.or.us/pw/parks/](http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/pw/parks/)).

### **Focus**

The Skinner Butte Park Master Plan takes a broad focus to cover all areas, aspects and uses of the park comprehensively. It also aspires to reveal and express the unique attributes of the park, meaning those that hold the most value for the community and park system, and keep them in mind throughout the process. In essence, the focus of this plan is to seek out and describe common themes that unify the park experience, as well as its different needs, and outline their future in a balanced way.

*(continued on next page)*

**Outreach efforts sought opinions from a broad cross section of the entire community**

## **He said, She said . . . Comment Station Highlights**

- ▶ A total of 92 comment sheets were filled out and deposited in comment boxes at five different locations around Eugene. Several comment sheets were mailed to city staff.
- ▶ **The average level of support for the draft master plan was 8.5 out of 10**
- ▶ **Over 80% of the respondents said YES , the draft master plan meets their needs**
- ▶ The top three priorities listed by respondents for spending current Parks and Open Space bond measure funding were:
  - 1) Natural area restoration
  - 2) Riverbank interpretive trail
  - 3) Butte trail system





*Despite its age, the playground at Skinner Butte Park is still a popular destination. Over half of park visitors report using this facility.*

There are four particular areas that generally summarize the focus of discussion: history, natural resources, park amenities and site circulation. Most elements of the master plan will deal with on one or more of these areas. It is in their combination, however, that they are most valuable, and should be considered.

### **Further Development**

One element of the master plan is a set of criteria to guide more detailed planning efforts. The implication is that these efforts will refine the master plan in the scope of its findings and recommendations. The master plan, therefore, will serve as the planning umbrella for these refinements and provide the policy framework for their execution.

### **Scope**

File documents show widely varying definitions of Skinner Butte Park. In most documents, one or more elements of the park have either been omitted or have since changed through property acquisition or similar actions. To clarify this for the current master planning effort, the park area shall be defined henceforth as follows:

Skinner Butte Park encompasses all city-owned park property abutting the south bank of the Willamette River from the Ferry Street Bridge extending west to the I-105 bridge, and extending from the banks of

the Willamette River southward to Cheshire Avenue, Second Avenue, the 3rd/4th Connector, or to the boundary of residential and/or commercial property.

### **Specific elements contained within the scope of the plan**

Campbell Senior Center, Lamb Cottage, the residential dwelling occupied by Child Care, Inc., the “columns” climbing area, and other facilities contained within the park and serving a park, recreation or open space function are contained within the scope of the master plan.

### **Special relationships**

The master plan recognizes certain features that are integral to the park, but currently serve a non-park specific purpose, are guided by different sets of goals, and/or are under separate management. Recommendations or accommodations may be made for these features in the master plan, but must be applied through a collaborative effort with other City departments or external organizations. These features include the 1926 EWEB-owned reservoir, the communications tower, the Shelton-McMurphy-Johnson house and property, and the Lincoln Yard area (see Map 2: Site Features).

**Skinner Butte Park, as defined for this plan, is about 100 acres in size and includes many special features.**

# Master Plan Highlights

## Overview

The following are some highlights of the master plan. The issues, vision, goals and strategies form the framework within which the more detailed Management Plans and Implementation Plan are created. These sections are discussed in Chapter 6: Skinner Butte Park Master Plan.

## Issues

One of the key objectives of the first workshop was to explore issues facing Skinner Butte Park. The following list highlights the most commonly mentioned and critical of these issues. The list has been updated and revised as research and broader public input helped direct the process. The planning process was aimed at addressing these specific issues, which helped set the tone for discussions and research leading to master plan recommendations.



*The few small areas of native upland prairie that remain on Skinner Butte are rapidly disappearing*

### Issues in Skinner Butte Park

**Issue #1:** The mission and role of the park is unclear.

**Issue #2:** The park’s rich natural and cultural history has tremendous potential but is poorly represented and interpreted.

**Issue #3:** Active management of natural areas is needed.

**Issue #4:** Park amenities are insufficient and out-dated.

**Issue #5:** The butte embodies multiple unique values.

**Issue #6:** The Willamette River is a key component of the park.

**Issue #7:** A connection from the butte to downtown is of key importance, but does not currently exist.

**Issue #8:** Access and circulation are adequate, but could be improved.

*Issues are described in greater detail in Chapter 5*

## Vision Statement

**The vision statement sets the bar for the master plan**

The Skinner Butte Park vision statement responds to the issues and desires generated at the first public workshop. It is a long-term picture of how the park should look and function. A draft vision statement was presented at the second workshop and amended to become more inclusive and

respond to a desire for emphasis in certain areas. The goals, strategies and actions listed hereafter are all tools to realize this vision.

**As the birthplace of Eugene, and as a unique landmark of geography, history and ecology, Skinner Butte Park plays a vital role at the heart of our community. The care and stewardship of this public resource shall be a top priority, with a focus on creating a “crown jewel” of Eugene’s parks. Skinner Butte Park will foster civic pride and a citywide sense of community, and will provide a diverse blend of recreational and educational opportunities for everyone. This shall be accomplished by emphasizing and interpreting its rich cultural history and unique geography, including the butte and the Willamette River; by building a stronger connection to downtown; by revitalizing its core park facilities and, above all; by protecting and enhancing its valuable native habitats for the enjoyment of future generations.**



*Spencer Butte as seen from Skinner Butte overlook*

The vision statement is founded strongly in public values, as shown in the following sampling of visionary quotes from the Skinner Butte Park Workshop #1 Report:

- “Improved recreational opportunities for the large community.”
- “It gives us a sense of place, a landmark. A sense of time . . .”
- “. . . create on the butte a most enjoyable site for citizens and guests to visit, a “crown jewel” of Eugene.
- “A connection from city to river, and a connection with our past . . .”
- “. . . a natural, native, wildlife and plant space.”
- “As a person from the broader community, I’ve enjoyed this park because of its size, proximity to the river, capacity to accommodate large picnics, large turf areas for a variety of play, natural areas, views from the top, botanical diversity, ability to accommodate special events that are not appropriate for other parks.”
- “. . . bring back its natural beauty - the Kalapuya’s vision, the Skinners, the immigrants, the farm . . .”
- “As an environment of green space, urban forest, natural waterway - provides a major urban area with a very necessary non-urban environment - an area where the entire community can stay in touch with natural beauty and potentially agricultural aspects which are necessary to our lives.”
- “As a site for recreating. As a site for education.”

# Goals

The following goals are adapted from research, interviews and responses at public workshops for the Skinner Butte Master plan. These goals set the stage for specific ways of achieving the vision presented in the vision statement. They can also be called “policy goals” in that they affect park improvement, maintenance and programming policies, as well as how future ideas for what to do with the park will be evaluated.



View southeast towards the Willamette River ca. 1900. Skinner Butte has been a popular destination for generations, and is home to a rich cultural heritage.

## Goals for Skinner Butte Park

1. **Preserve, enhance and recognize Skinner Butte Park’s rich natural and cultural history as a predominant theme, and promote this through diverse interpretive and educational opportunities.**
2. **Protect, repair and restore the health and viability of diverse habitat types in Skinner Butte Park by creatively managing valuable natural resources and successional processes.**
3. **Improve and maintain Skinner Butte Park as a key, high-quality civic destination for private, public, community and neighborhood social events, activities and individual recreation.**
4. **Recognize the Willamette River and the river corridor as a key component of Skinner Butte Park, and to protect, repair and restore this resource while integrating a balance of recreational access and use.**
5. **Emphasize and encourage bicycle and pedestrian transportation while providing for clear, convenient and adequate disabled access and vehicular use within Skinner Butte Park .**
6. **Recognize and strengthen Skinner Butte Park’s connection with downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.**

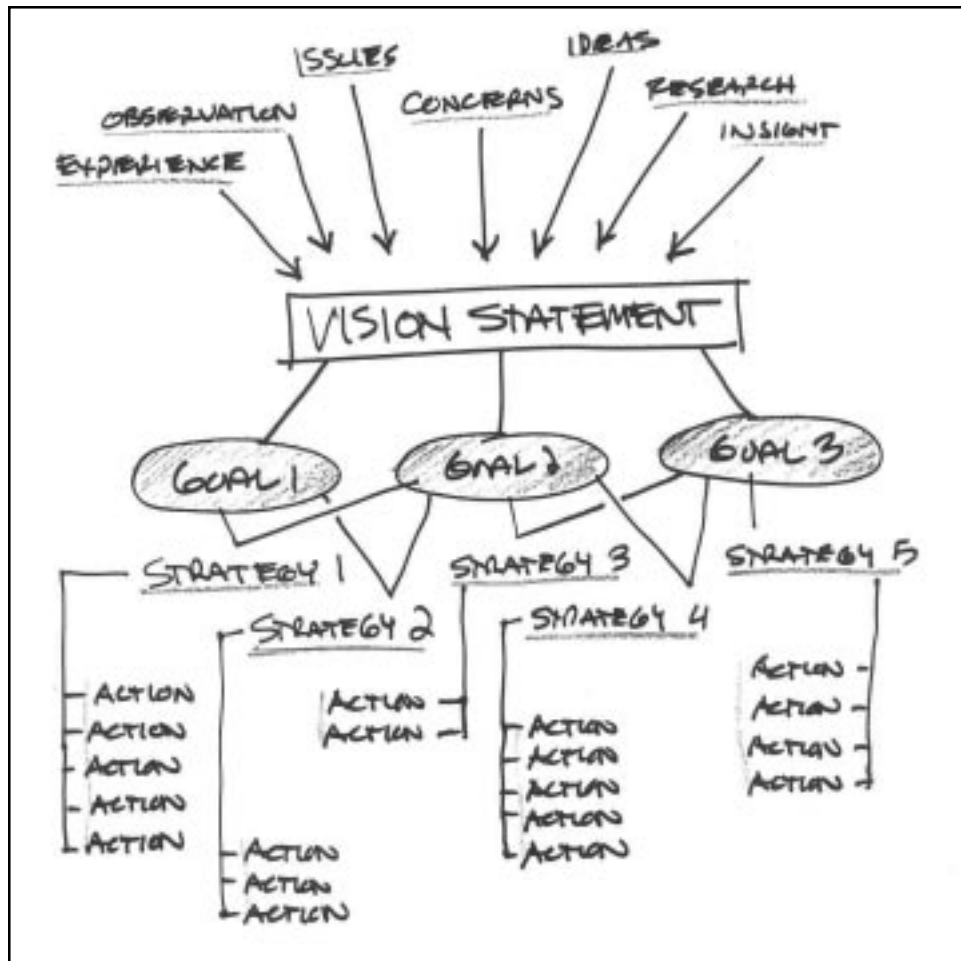
*Setting clear goals is a necessary part of realizing a vision*



Workshop #1,  
discussion, idea gathering,  
research

Workshop #2,  
evaluation, discussion,  
research, design

Workshop #3,  
ideas gathered from all  
public involvement and  
research efforts, details  
contained in  
implementation plan



The above diagram, presented at the second public workshop, describes the relationship between different elements of the master plan and planning process



Around 50 participants gathered to discuss the park at the first public workshop.

# Strategies

The following section describes specific strategies, or ways of achieving the master planning goals for Skinner Butte Park. These strategies begin to chart the way, step by step, towards realizing the overall

vision for the park. The **Implementation Plan** (see chapter 5) provides more detailed criteria and specific, prioritized actions related to the strategies listed here.

## Skinner Butte Master Plan Strategies

### 1. Strategy: Establish an interpretive, education and preservation program for cultural history and natural history/ecology.

- 1.1 NATURAL HISTORY: Increase public awareness and stewardship of natural resources, natural history and restoration projects through interpretation and education.
- 1.2 SETTLEMENT AND MODERN HISTORY: Expand public awareness of local cultural history through interpretation and historic preservation.
- 1.3 HISTORIC VIEWS: Preserve, protect and restore historic views.
- 1.4 NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE: Incorporate elements in Skinner Butte Park that highlight the role of Native Americans in the region.
- 1.5 INTERPRETIVE CENTER: Develop an interpretive center

### 2. Strategy: Implement a Habitat Management Plan for Skinner Butte Park.

- 2.1 HABITAT INVENTORY: Continue research of natural resources within the park to better inform natural resource planning, restoration and management.
- 2.2 NATURAL SYSTEMS: Recognize and allow for the natural dynamics of diverse ecosystem types.

- 2.3 EROSION CONTROL: Control river bank erosion to allow for seasonal flooding and improve the riparian ecosystem.
- 2.4 ECOSYSTEM FUNCTIONS: Identify opportunities for increasing ecosystem functions for the park as a whole.
- 2.5 INVASIVE SPECIES: Remove and control invasive plant species throughout the park.
- 2.6 HABITAT MANAGEMENT: Manage various areas of the park for the following habitat types: conifer forest, river/riparian, oak savanna, upland prairie and wet prairie.
- 2.7 HABITAT RESTORATION: Restore certain areas of the park to a higher habitat value.

### 3. Strategy: Create management units to guide implementation strategies.

### 4. Strategy: Redevelop and maintain key park and recreational facilities

- 4.1 SKINNER BUTTE SUMMIT: Redevelop the top of the butte in a manner that consistent with a high-quality community focal point that reflects the park's historic context.
- 4.2 CORE EVENT AREA: Improve park facilities to accommodate and promote a core event area for small and large group social activities such as organized picnics, weddings, festivals, etc.

## Skinner Butte Master Plan Strategies

**Master Plan strategies are fleshed out by a list of prioritized actions in the Implementation Plan (see Chapter 5)**

- 4.3 PLAYGROUND: Fundamentally redevelop the existing playground as a citywide attraction
- 4.4 WEST END: Redevelop the west end of the park for education, interpretation and recreational use in keeping with the character and unique aspects of the park.
- 4.5 LAMB COTTAGE: Revitalize Lamb Cottage and surrounding area to support group events and provide an anchor for the Skinner Butte Promenade.
- 4.6 OPEN SPACE: Designate adequate open space within the park
- 4.7 LANDSCAPE AND IRRIGATION: Address the general condition, maintenance and development of landscape areas throughout the park.
- 4.8 LIGHTING: Provide for adequate lighting in the park.
- 4.9 RESTROOMS: Provide adequate sanitary facilities in the park.
- 4.10 COLUMNS: Improve and maintain the columns as a public climbing area.
- 4.11 MEMORIALS: Carefully evaluate the introduction of new personal or public memorials within Skinner Butte Park
- 4.12 INTRUSIONS: Identify and mitigate physical intrusions impacting recreation and aesthetic values within the park.
5. **Strategy: Develop and apply design standards for all built facilities and infrastructure that reflects and emphasizes the park's historic context.**
6. **Strategy: Improve and maintain pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle traffic circulation patterns to emphasize alternative transportation, accessibility and safety.**
- 6.1 SKINNER BUTTE PROMENADE: Explore the development of a clear and convenient pedestrian promenade from downtown via the summit of Skinner Butte and Lamb Cottage to the Willamette River.
- 6.2 TRAIL SYSTEM: Construct a clear trail system for the butte and the river corridor.
- 6.3 EMPHASIZE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION: Emphasize and encourage alternative transportation modes within the park, as well as to and from the park.
- 6.4 PARKING MODIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT: Maximize use of existing paved areas while minimizing construction of new parking.
- 6.5. CHESHIRE AVENUE MODIFICATIONS: Modify existing street to support key park values.
- 6.6. MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS: Enhance multi-modal entrance areas and connect them visually to downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.
- 6.7 I-105 UNDERPASS: Redevelop this area for pedestrian and bicycle access between the west Whiteaker neighborhood, Owen Rose Garden and Skinner Butte Park.
- 6.8 DISABLED ACCESS: Work towards ADA-compliant access to all key park facilities.
- 6.9 EQUESTRIAN ACCESS: Consider access by horses as a unique mode of transportation reflecting and promoting the park's unique historic values
7. **Strategy: Implement measures to improve public safety within Skinner Butte Park.**
8. **Strategy: Facilitate follow-through and continuity of master plan goals.**

## Priorities

The Parks and Open Space bond measure allocated \$300,000 for improvements to Skinner Butte Park. Through the long-term, comprehensive scope of the master plan, many more projects have been identified than this funding will cover. Although a portion of the bond measure funding has been allocated to support the master planning process, priorities needed to be identified for the balance of the available funding. Several criteria were considered in setting these priorities.

### Community Input

The community was invited to comment on general funding priorities at the draft master plan displays placed at various locations around town for a period of two weeks (see Master Plan Methodology, this chapter). Immediately following the public displays, an exercise at the end of the third public workshop also encouraged meeting participants to identify their top funding priorities from a detailed list of projects.

### Other Factors

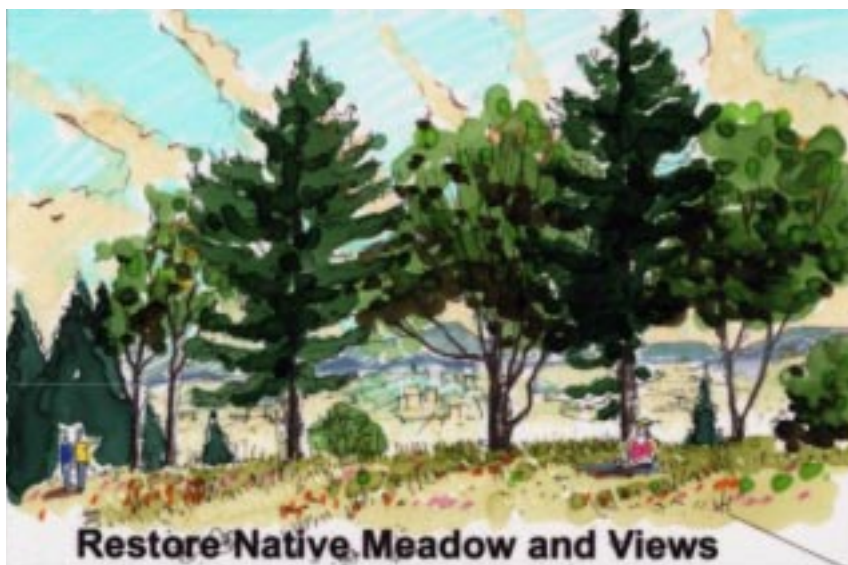
There may be a logical sequence of construction that influences whether or not a project can be completed. Similarly, many projects need a much higher level of funding than the Parks and Open Space bond measure provides, and these projects become candidates for future funding opportunities. Smaller projects that are related to or dependent on these projects, therefore, are also contingent on securing future funding. Projects that are better suited to volunteer efforts have also been identified. In some cases, projects that can be supported with a relatively small capital investment, but generate a relatively large amount of interest and stewardship in the park, are seen as opportunities to extend current funding. Opportunities may exist to leverage existing funding through partnerships with other organizations or programs, such as the City's Comprehensive Stormwater Management Program. As these opportunities are identified, certain projects may become a higher priority to take advantage of the additional funding available through partnerships.

***The community was asked to help set priorities for how to spend current funding***



*Restoring of river bank habitat, and developing an interpretive hiking trail are top priorities for Parks and Open Space bond measure funding*





*Another high priority for Parks and Open Space bond measure funding is the restoration of native upland prairie and preservation of significant views from Skinner Butte.*



*Large projects like the Skinner Butte Promenade, although a high priority and very important for the function of the park and downtown Eugene, will need additional funding sources.*

### **Top Ten Priorities for Skinner Butte Park**

The Implementation Plan portion of the Skinner Butte Park Master Plan (see Chapter 6, Implementation Plan) contains a complete listing of proposed project priorities. The following are the top ten priorities to be funded by the 1998 Parks and Open Space bond measure (Measure 20-03).

1. Initiate and execute an in-depth habitat inventory study for the butte and the river habitats and connections.
2. Develop and implement a control plan to remove targeted invasive plant species, and develop a general action plan for removal of all invasive species
3. Redevelop the trail system on Skinner Butte
4. Create a River-Bottom Interpretive Trail
5. Convert certain mixed successional shrub and forest areas on the south, east and west slopes of the butte to native upland prairie
6. Convert certain areas of lawn to native wet prairie, where possible, to serve as potential water quality enhancement or infiltration areas
7. Provide irrigation to the historic community farm site
8. Develop viewshed management parameters and restore viewshed
9. Design and install interpretive signage for cultural history, including the story of the Kalapuya
10. Design and install interpretive signage for natural history



## CHAPTER 2: NATURAL HISTORY AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

### Introduction

To better understand the role of Skinner Butte Park in both past and present human culture, it is helpful to get a sense of the formative processes that created the landscape we see today. A short bibliography is included at the end of the Master Plan for further reading.

### Geography

Eugene lies at the southern terminus of the Willamette Valley, where the Coast Range and the Cascade Range merge in a series of forested foothills. These hills surround the Eugene area to the south, east and west, and include landmarks such as Spencer Butte, College Hill, and the ridgeline. Much of the land in and around Eugene is generally characterized by flat, alluvial plains punctuated by volcanic hills rising no more than a few hundred feet above the valley floor.

Skinner Butte is one such volcanic hill, which lies in an approximate north-south line formed by two other basalt-core hills: Spencer Butte to the south and Gillespie Butte to the north. The summit of Skinner Butte lies approximately 682 feet above sea level (see Map 3: Topography). The summit is elongated, running in a roughly east-west direction, and includes a small, perhaps artificially enhanced, bench to the east of the summit and about fifty feet lower. Skinner Butte and some other nearby hills were formed when magma pushed upward through the earth's crust and cooled very slowly, creating the regular, polygonal stone

formations commonly known as “columnar basalt”. The columnar basalt at the core of Skinner Butte was quarried towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and used throughout the region for everything from building foundations to grave markers. The old quarry is now a popular public rock climbing area.

Aside from Skinner Butte, the Willamette River is certainly the most dominant geographic feature in the park. One of the largest rivers in the Pacific Northwest, the Willamette flows through Eugene in a roughly west by northwesterly direction. The geomorphology of the river is characterized in the Willamette Valley by dramatic floods, which have historically led to continual shifting and change in the river channel and banks. It was common for the river to shift its course dramatically, carving new channels and abandoning old ones.

*Workers in the Skinner Butte quarry c. 1908*



Skinner Butte Park lies along the southern bank of the Willamette River. Several river terraces are evidence of flooding activity of varying frequency. The lower and mid terraces flood on a more frequent cycle than the upper terrace or “main terrace”, where the majority of park improvements such as the playground, restrooms, Campbell Senior Center, etc. are now located. Contemporary development and human activity has dramatically changed the character and hydrology of the Willamette River (see Chapter 4).

Soils in Skinner Butte Park range from deep, well-drained alluvium (Chapman and Malabon-Urban land complex) to relatively thin and rocky soils derived from the basaltic core of Skinner Butte. Many soils in the park have been changed and disturbed by human activities.

## Flora and Fauna

The plants and animals living in and around Skinner Butte Park have changed dramatically over the past 150 years or so. Some have disappeared, and others are thriving. It is part of the legacy of Euro-American settlement and urban development that will be an important interpretive theme for the park. It is a theme dominated by change, and how continually shifting cultural attitudes affect the landscape. The following description helps to provide a basic frame for the scope of that change, from its probable condition prior to Euro-American settlement to a modern, urban park.

### ***When the Grizzly Bear Roamed***

Because of the diversity of habitats found there, Skinner Butte Park was home to a rich variety of plants and animals. Although a future habitat management study will develop a much more complete list of plants and animals found there today (see Chapter 6, Implementation Plan), it is helpful to get an overview of what one might have seen before the time of Euro-American settlement.

The landscape around Skinner Butte Park was once very different. According to federal surveys carried out in the 1850s, much of the Willamette Valley landscape was a vast and open grassland, extending south into the foothills and sweeping northward to the banks of the Columbia River (see Figure 1). The springtime brought a tide of purple to the prairie as the native camas bloomed, giving way to the golden yellow of tarweed, or native sunflower, in the later summer. Oregon white oak punctuated the grassland, where single trees or small groves had grown large enough to resist the effects of regular fires set by the Kalapuya natives (see “The Kalapuya,” this chapter). Ash groves spread out over low-lying, seasonally flooded areas, and the continually shifting channels of the Willamette River and its tributaries were marked by a broad band of towering cottonwood, alder, bigleaf maple, willow and others in diverse stages of succession.

Skinner Butte rose above the Willamette River where the sweeping prairie spilled over the high south bank. Several tough, drought-resistant oaks grew here and there on the thin soil on its ridges and summit, with perhaps a handful of Douglas fir on the north side of the butte. Patches of wild

***Skinner Butte and the Willamette River are the dominant geographic features of the park***



*Evidence of beavers can still be found in Skinner Butte Park, like this beaver-gnawed tree*





**Figure 1: Historic Vegetation Patterns**

*This diagram, derived from federal land surveys c. 1850, shows vegetation types around Skinner Butte Park*

rose, poison oak and other drought-tolerant shrubs grew among the grasses and wildflowers of the butte and its gently sloping flanks.

Along the Willamette, mammoth cottonwoods, alder and bigleaf maple shaded the river terraces where snowberry, dogwood and herbaceous perennials flowered in the wet spring months. The upper banks of the river, high enough to be flooded only very rarely, may have also been dotted with a few Oregon white oak, mixed with the occasional bigleaf maple and Douglas fir. The low banks were a series of wandering gravel bars, islands, channels and sloughs, sprouting with willows, alder and cottonwood in all stages of succession. In some places, the river and its network of gravelly braids may have regularly wandered over an area up to a mile wide.

The area that today is Skinner Butte Park was likely part of a rich landscape with abundant wildlife. Before settlers arrived, black bear and grizzly bear roamed the mountain slopes and prairies, foraging on berries and occasionally taking the young or weak of the abundant blacktail deer. Coyote and fox hunted the forest edges and brush patches for cottontail rabbits, field mice and other small mammals. The skies were patrolled by great raptors like the golden eagle, red-tailed hawk and many others. Elk herds migrated back and forth between the mountains and the lowland meadows, following the greenest pastures of the season.

**Regular fires created the open prairie landscape that dominated the area prior to 1850**

Never far away, the mighty Willamette flowed past them all. Beavers dammed its tributaries or built their dens on the shifting backwaters of the main river, sharing the waters and river edge with other mammals such as otter, muskrat, mink, and raccoon. Osprey and bald eagles rode the warm updrafts from Skinner Butte, soaring over the river waters in search of native cutthroat trout, pike-minnow or pea-mouth. Seasonal migrations of salmon and steelhead filed past the butte on their way to the ocean, or returning to the gravel beds of their conception.

### ***When the Burning Stopped***

Although fur trappers visited the area decades earlier, the era of Euro-American settlers was heralded by the arrival of Eugene and Mary Skinner in 1846 (see “Euro-American Settlement,” this chapter). This closed the book on thousands of years of gradual evolution of ecological interrelationships, and opened a new chapter of unprecedented change for the plant and animal species of the area.

Most dramatically, even before the Skinner’s arrival, the fires of the Kalapuya had mostly stopped (see “The Kalapuya,” this chapter), and the landscape had begun to change. As settlers claimed the land in the upper Willamette valley, the remaining survivors of the Kalapuya people were “resettled” to reservations, and the fires they used as a tool to manage the land stopped altogether. Although the irregular cycle of burning used by the Kalapuya is arguably not a natural phenomenon, it had nevertheless, over several thousand years, brought about a unique and diverse ecosystem dependent upon that cycle. When the burning stopped, the days were numbered for the broad grasslands and scattered oaks of the Willamette Valley.

Since natural, lightning-strike fires are rare in the landscape of the Willamette Valley and western Oregon, there are few natural forces, other than flooding and erosion, that maintain an open landscape. Without burning, other taller and faster growing trees such as Douglas fir and bigleaf maple quickly grow up and shade out the more

fire and drought-resistant oak trees. Within just a few generations, savanna-prairie is transformed into a temperate, mixed conifer and hardwood forest. Plant communities, and the creatures that depend upon them, disappear and give way to a new set of interrelationships that are adapted to the changing conditions.

This process had already begun by the time the Skinners arrived. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the culture of the Kalapuya was already a shadow of what it once was. The fires had decreased in frequency. The planning and execution of fire management, once highly organized and sub-divided among the various tribal bands, had become increasingly erratic. Nevertheless, reports of early settlers describe the area as open meadows and fields that reminded them of cultivated wheat.

The pattern of open prairie was probably maintained to some extent throughout the settlement period by several factors, including removal of existing tree stands for fuel and construction, agriculture and grazing. The slopes of Skinner Butte were reportedly grazed by cattle and sheep in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This presumably kept the character of the south, east and west slopes similar to the time of the Skinners' arrival. The north side of the butte, however, being more conducive to the germination of Douglas fir seedlings (more shade, moisture and deeper soils), had long since begun to develop into an early successional fir forest.

Also during this period, the wildlife of the area was impacted by the habits and survival needs of Euro-American settlers. Grizzly bears and wolves, among the most feared and aggressively pursued of the large predators, disappeared from the Willamette Valley and continually retreated to more remote areas. A strong fur trade saw a significant reduction in numbers of small mammals such as coyote, fox, beaver and muskrat. Large birds of prey also began to decline as more settlers arrived. The habits and patterns of many other species of animals were changed

irrevocably through new patterns of land use, including grazing, agriculture, streets, and eventually industry and urban development.

### ***The Other Immigrants***

Euro-American settlers found that many of their favorite plants brought from other parts of the world, including food crops and ornamental plants, thrived in the fertile soil and favorable climate of the Willamette Valley, with mild winters, high rainfall and cool summers. Collectors and enthusiasts brought with them hundreds of new plant species for their gardens. Many other species were introduced accidentally, as plants drifted in literally on the heels of the newly arrived. Some of these plants naturalized (began to reproduce on their own in the wild), and in the blink of an evolutionary eye, the landscape began to look very different.

The most successful of these new species, those that were able to reproduce so quickly and vigorously that they began to take over large areas and crowd out the native plants, are known as "invasive" species. Many invasive species dominate Skinner Butte Park today, including Himalayan blackberry, Scotch broom, English ivy, Norway maple, English

***The landscape changed dramatically with the arrival of invasive plant species***



*Invasive species such as this English laurel are destroying habitats in Skinner Butte Park*

**Cultural attitudes about plants and landscape aesthetics are constantly changing**

hawthorn, and many others (see Chapter 6, Habitat Management Plan). Coupled with the removal of fire as a management tool, these invasive species have dramatically reduced habitat diversity in the park, creating monocultures (where one kind of plant dominates) that smother the diverse communities of native plants that would otherwise be growing there.

### **Cultural Preferences**

Cultural habits and attitudes also played a strong role in the changing landscape, particularly on Skinner Butte. Towards the end of the settlement era, closing out the 19<sup>th</sup> century and entering into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the practices of grazing on the butte eventually gave way to industry, municipal utilities and urban development as the Eugene grew up around the park (see “Euro-American Settlement,” this chapter). The cultural aesthetic of the time favored ornamental trees, and people began to feel that the butte would look better decorated with a few trees. For example, a grove of incense cedar was planted around the home of Dr. Shelton in the 1880s. This grove has since spread to cover a large portion of the lower and middle south slope of the butte. Several municipal tree planting efforts also took place, including a 1934 Veteran’s Day tree planting ceremony.

These planting efforts merely accelerated what natural succession would have done anyway: transformed the butte from part of a vast savanna-prairie to an island of emerging forest. After the fires and grazing stopped, the invasive species arrived, and tree planting began, many areas of Skinner Butte are now dense, wooded and brushy. Only a few, rapidly disappearing remnants of savanna-prairie on the east and west slopes (see Map 4: Existing Vegetation).

### **Endangered Habitat**

As we see it today, Skinner Butte Park is unrecognizable from its condition prior to Euro-American settlement. The forested hill surrounded by a sea of buildings and homes bears little resemblance to the gently sloping, grassy knoll that stood relatively unchanged for thousands of years.

The Oregon white oak savanna-prairie, a once vast and abundant habitat type indigenous to the Willamette Valley, is now nearly extinct. Less than one percent remains. Some of the animal species that depend upon savanna-prairie are also gone, or nearly gone, from the valley, and are not likely to return given the fragmented state of the remaining habitat. However, although it has been radically altered over the past 150 or so years, the park remains a showcase for plant communities and successional trends that are common to the Willamette Valley. It is a similar story that is happening everywhere, in the Willamette Valley and around the world. The presence of this resource in the center of Eugene is particularly unique and valuable as a tool for teaching the story of local plant and animal communities, how they fit in with human culture, and how they are both changing.

### **Birds**

It is worth pointing out that the butte, as both bird habitat and a recreational resource for birding, is still extremely valuable despite enormous development and change. Skinner Butte and its unique geography are exceptionally attractive to migratory birds. Despite changes in vegetation, or perhaps in some cases because of them, Skinner Butte has become a regional magnet for birds and birders alike. It is located in the flight path of many species of migratory birds traveling through the Willamette Valley corridor. The shape and size of the butte, and its isolated

**Skinner Butte is an excellent place to view a diversity of bird species, including migratory birds and large resident birds such as the great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*)**





location near the south end of the valley, seems to attract birds traveling northward in the spring to stop, rest and forage before continuing their journey. Many of the larger, deciduous trees on the south, southwest and west summit area, and along the entire northern crest of the summit, are especially favored by migrating birds and the birders seeking them out (see Chapter 5, Habitat Management Plan for further discussion and recommendations). The park is also home to many uncommon and interesting resident bird species such as osprey and great horned owl.

## The Kalapuya

The story of the Kalapuya, the native inhabitants of the southern Willamette Valley, is both sad and compelling, and has been widely misunderstood for most of contemporary history. It is a story that has been pieced together over decades through scattered bits of information and memory. As anthropologists broaden their understanding, the official story that is unfolding begins to sound more like the story told by the modern descendants of the Kalapuya themselves: of a great culture in a land of abundance.

### **A Vanished Civilization**

It is estimated that there were somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 Kalapuya living in and around the Willamette Valley in the year 1770 (Boyd 1990). By the time Eugene and Mary Skinner arrived in 1846, less than 70 years later, there were estimated to be fewer than 600 Kalapuya remaining. This represents over 95% mortality of a once thriving culture in a very short time (Connolly 1999). These numbers do not begin to describe the devastating epidemics of disease, including small pox, malaria and measles, that swept through the northwest, and lingered tenaciously in the Willamette Valley, between 1770 and 1840. Testimonials and a few scattered records from trapping expeditions and missionaries in the early 1800s describe the loss of entire villages in one season. They recount incredible suffering, and the flight of survivors from village sites to escape the infection.



*This 1841 sketch by A. T. Agate of the U.S. Exploring Expedition shows the artist's interpretation of a Kalapuya man.*

The result of this devastation, wrought so quickly and so thoroughly, was “a complete breakdown in social structures, communities, and traditional modes of behavior, and the imposition of a demoralizing hopelessness on the survivors” (Connolly 1999). Through the desertion of settlements and the re-grouping of survivors in other places, there was little left of the once great network of Kalapuya tribes and clans that shared the valley. Not only were there very few left who could remember or recount the life of the Kalapuya before 1770, but during this period of catastrophic decline, there is no written record of the Kalapuya people. Later historical accounts from early settlers often describe the native inhabitants of the valley as sickly and wretched. The Willamette Valley had also been perennially dubbed “The Valley of Sickness.” But this was not the way things had been over the previous millennia. This does not describe the real Kalapuya culture. What the first Euro-American settlers saw, therefore, was only the aftermath.

**Disease had claimed about 95% of the Kalapuya people by the time Euro-American settlers arrived in the area**



***The Kalapuya culture has long been mysterious and misunderstood***

***Prior to the epidemics, the Kalapuya culture was large, complex and becoming an agricultural society***

*The camas lily was an important staple food for the Kalapuya*



In the 1850s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs “resettled” the remaining Kalapuya to the Grand Ronde Reservation, along with other western Oregon tribal groups, near the present-day town of Willamina. Their ancestral lands were officially placed in the public domain for settlement through the Donation Land Claims program. They were not compensated. Despite resistance to government treaties and resettlement in other areas, as exemplified by the Rogue Indian War in southern Oregon, the Kalapuya did not resist. Evidence suggests that their culture was, by this time, too scattered, and the Willamette Valley already too densely populated by Euro-American settlers.

It was not until after this period of relocation to reservations that early ethnographers, for the first time, began transcribing oral histories from the Kalapuya themselves. Most of the information that exists from the Kalapuya comes from interviews during this period, and from the inherited oral tradition that the Kalapuya descendants carry with them.

It is little wonder, then, that even the most open-minded and searching of ethnographers have been challenged to piece together this mystery: what were the Kalapuya really like? To answer that question, the bits and pieces of information that do exist need to be carefully examined and continually reinterpreted.

Modern research methods allow an increasingly accurate glimpse into the climate and plant communities over thousands of years, shedding light on the conditions under which the inhabitants of the Willamette Valley lived. Archaeological techniques are also improving, and traditional biases and filters for their interpretation are slowly falling away to be replaced by new, more accurate analyses. Most importantly, the history of the Kalapuya, as it is told by the Kalapuya themselves, is more becoming more readily accepted than it once was. Through all of these methods, a picture of a lost culture is beginning to form.

## ***The Golden Age***

Radiocarbon dating has indicated that the Willamette Valley’s first human inhabitants probably arrived some 12,000 years ago. For several thousand years, small family bands roamed about a sparsely populated landscape, hunting and collecting wild foods where they were most readily available, and moving on to other areas when the food was depleted.

As the population of the valley eventually increased, the archaeological record shows that the pattern shifted to a more stabilized lifestyle. About 5,000 to 6,000 years ago, evidence suggests the construction of more permanent settlements, including the “construction of substantial houses, and the intensive harvest of certain abundant foods (such as salmon)” (Connolly 1999), as well as the storage of food. Since the salmon population in the upper Willamette River was never great enough to serve as a main food staple, the inhabitants of the Willamette River began to intensively harvest and process camas, a highly nutritious bulb growing abundantly in moist prairie areas of the valley floor. Several other species of plant growing on the prairies, such as varieties of native sunflower (or tarweed), were also harvested at least as intensively as camas as a food staple.

Around 3,500 to 4,000 years ago, the inhabitants of the Willamette Valley probably began to take on a more settled life similar to what it must have been like just prior to the introduction of disease in 1770. This probably represents the Kalapuya as they were described by descendants on the Grande Ronde Indian Reservation and recorded in the 1850s by early ethnographers.

The Kalapuya had begun to settle into a broad assemblage of ethnically related communities or bands, each with its own cluster of separate villages, and each typically speaking a separate dialect of the Kalapuya language. Each band shared certain resources, such as big game, within a well-defined territory. The boundaries for

these territories were, by all accounts, highly restricted with respect to the resource, but open for legitimate purposes such as trade. Other resources, such as fields of camas and tarweed, were controlled by specific villages, and plots within these fields belonged to specific individuals within the village.

One of the hallmarks of this final chapter of the Kalapuya culture, as with other cultures in Pacific coast valleys, was the use of fire to manage the landscape. Managed fire was an important discovery that held many benefits for the Kalapuya. First and foremost, it maintained the open prairie landscape favored by camas and native sunflower, their primary food sources. Burning eliminated the competition of trees, shrubs and other grasses that would eventually replace the natural meadows of food crops, and improved growing conditions for a host of other secondary food plants, such as Oregon white oak, hazelnut and huckleberry. Fire also created an open, park-like landscape that greatly enhanced mobility and the pursuit of game such as deer and elk, while at the same time concentrating them in the unburned stands of forest where they were easier to locate.

It has been said that the modern Kalapuya had become horticulturalists more so than hunter-gatherers. Probably they were both. But the evidence is clear that they intensively managed the landscape to produce what is understood to be a reliable source of food that supported, and was supported by, a highly organized and successful society. To some descriptions, the Kalapuya lifestyle would have been one of abundance, in a valley tailored by their own ingenuity to suit their needs.

In the warm months, the Kalapuya typically moved about the valley floor, setting up open camps in different areas as food sources became most abundant. This season was marked by the harvest and preparation of their staple foods such as camas, sunflower, acorns, tubers, fruits and berries, as well as with hunting and fishing. When the weather was favorable for travel, goods were traded with other bands of

Kalapuya, as well as with other tribal groups from the coast to the Columbia. Many of these footpaths became the basis for many pack trails and wagon trails used by settlers, and eventually for roads that are still in use today.

Wintertime brought the Kalapuya together in permanent settlements, characterized by groups of “pit houses”, or semi-subterranean, earth-walled buildings with bark roofs and central fire places. Several families often shared the larger houses. During the short, cold days and long nights, family groups and villages gathered for a time of storytelling. These stories were not only a form of entertainment, they were the most important vessel for passing knowledge, beliefs and morals of the Kalapuya culture from one generation to the next.

This rich oral tradition is anchored in the landscape of the Willamette Valley. Some Kalapuya stories, passed from one generation to the next in a very prescribed and precise manner, are still told today, and represent the truth for the contemporary Kalapuya descendants. Local features such as the Willamette River and Skinner Butte play central roles in their oral heritage.

***The Kalapuya have a rich oral tradition anchored in the Willamette Valley landscape, including Skinner Butte.***

### ***The Kalapuya and Skinner Butte Park***

Although evidence is particularly sparse for the traditions of the Kalapuya bands living in the southern Willamette Valley, Skinner Butte was reportedly used for certain ceremonial purposes. Historical references indicate the presence of a “stone ring” near the summit of the butte that was destroyed by the construction of the second reservoir in 1906 (see “A Brief History of Skinner Butte Park”). The purpose and timing of these ceremonies is unknown.

What is more certain, however, is that the Kalapuya used the butte for the same reason many people use it today: as a lookout. From the summit of Skinner Butte, one could survey the local landscape, from views of the Three Sisters to the coast range, and from Spencer Butte to Mt. Hood on a clear day. Keeping in mind that the



*This rare photograph reportedly depicts a mat-covered Kalapuya summer house*

atmosphere in the valley some 200 years ago was, by and large, much more clear than it is today, we can only surmise that this must have been a spectacular vista. From the butte, situated between the river and the Amazon flood plain, early inhabitants were probably also able to track the movements of wildlife through the local landscape, or the movements of other people.

The cultural use of Skinner Butte, therefore, is literally thousands of years old. Although dramatically altered, the views of the surrounding landscape enjoyed by park visitors today are pre-historic in their significance, and offer a perspective from which to view the changing landscape.

### **Looking Forward**

The legacy of the Kalapuya is complex. It is a colossal tragedy, and it is a source of inspiration. It helps us understand the land we live in much more deeply, and it helps us see more clearly where we are going. The fate of the Kalapuya, as with countless other Native American cultures in North America and elsewhere, is inextricably connected to the culture that consumed them. In the case of some Willamette Valley settlers, the Kalapuya were their friends, and often their lifeline. Relations during this contact period were predominantly peaceful. Indeed, there are friendships between settler families and Kalapuya families that are still strong today, where the descendants of both still live near one another on the lands of their ancestors.

Both the Kalapuya and Euro-American settlers had one goal in common: to survive, and to persevere. And, indeed, both have done so.

As a metropolitan park at the center of our community, it is fitting that Skinner Butte Park play a role in beginning to interpret and share that legacy. A wish has been expressed by members of the community that this legacy be one of clear understanding about what happened to the Kalapuya people, but more importantly one of mutual survival, understanding, and looking towards the future.

## **Euro-American Settlement**

### **The First Explorers**

The very earliest of Euro-American explorers arrived along the Pacific Northwest coast in the mid and late 1500s in search of the mythic northwest passage. The area remained largely uncharted, however, until Captain Cook landed at present-day British Columbia, where he developed a rich fur trade with the native inhabitants. This discovery brought many more traders and explorers from several European countries, and between the late 1700s and the early 1800s, at least 443 expeditions had landed on Pacific Northwest shores.

Other explorers searched for the northwest passage overland. The first was Alexander McKenzie in 1793, followed by the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804. Lewis and Clark knew about the Willamette Valley, but never ventured into its vast prairies during their voyage down the Columbia.

Fur trappers from trading outposts at present-day Astoria were probably the first explorers to wander into the Willamette Valley. Around 1812, several larger expeditions traveled as far as the East-Fork Willamette River (now the McKenzie River), and brought news of broad plains, open woodlands and fertile soil that quickly spread to would-be pioneers from the

**Skinner Butte Park can play a role in sharing the story of the Kalapuya with the community**

eastern United States. By the 1840's, the Oregon Territory had begun to open up to immigrants following the Oregon Trail and seeking to settle the fertile lands.

In 1846, Eugene Skinner arrived from California with a small group of immigrants that became the first to establish a permanent settlement in the upper Willamette Valley. Skinner staked a 640-acre Donation Land Claim in the area around Skinner Butte Park, and built his first cabin in the fall of 1846 on the western slope of Skinner Butte. A marker commemorates the location of the cabin near First Avenue and Lincoln Street. The actual location of the original cabin, however, is still subject to debate and investigation.

For the settlers, the first winters were extremely difficult. Arriving in the fall, they were forced to live off provisions until crops could be planted and harvested at the end of the next season. Letters and reports tell of hardship and hunger, and mutual dependence to make it through the cold and wet winter. Other references are made to the friendliness and support of the Kalapuya living in the area.

### ***The Applegate Trail***

Also in 1846, two brothers, Jesse and Lindsay Applegate, began their quest to establish a safe overland wagon route to the Willamette Valley. At the time, the Oregon trail included a treacherous water route along the Columbia River for those seeking to reach the Willamette Valley, and many lives were lost along this treacherous section of the trail. The Applegate brothers had themselves each lost a child in a rafting accident and vowed to spare other families this same grief.

The new southern route of the Oregon Trail became known as the Applegate Trail. Branching off the Oregon Trail at Fort Hall, Idaho, the trail dipped south into the deserts of Nevada, and crossed through the Rogue Valley before approximately following the present-day route of I-5 into the Willamette Valley. Almost immediately, thousands of settlers began their journey



*Eugene Skinner, the first settler in the area, staked his claim around what is now Skinner Butte Park*

on the new trail. Historical references indicated that the Applegate Trail passed just to the north of Skinner Butte, along what is now Cheshire Avenue. Today, the Applegate Trail Committee is an active and important advocate of history and historic interpretation in Skinner Butte Park.

### ***A Town is Born***

Mary Skinner and daughter, Mary Elizabeth, joined Eugene in 1847. By the summer of 1847, many more settlers began arriving on the Applegate Trail. As other early settlers staked claims in and around the region, Skinner opened up a trading post out of his cabin, and eventually began operating a ferry near the present-day location of the Ferry Street Bridge. Skinner's Post Office was authorized in 1850, and the settlement was officially designated with the same name.

The following year, Eugene Skinner and Judge Risdon set up meridians to plan a new town. Reports indicate that they stood on the summit of Skinner Butte, marking the line from Skinner Butte to the summit of Spencer Butte as the north-south axis of the town, and the line from the western summit of Skinner Butte due west as the

***The entire structure of the city is based on geometry with Skinner Butte at its center***



east-west axis. Today, these meridians are marked respectively by Willamette Street and First Avenue. Mary Skinner dubbed the new town “Eugene City”.

Throughout the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the increasing population in and around Eugene was predominantly concerned with agriculture, and for a brief time, limited grazing and cattle ranching. Beyond early subsistence farming for such crops as vegetables and oats, some of the first commercial crops included wheat and hops. Eventually, the development of the millrace laid the foundation for industry in Eugene City, including grist mills and eventually woolen mills. Other industries not dependent upon the millrace included a whiskey distillery, furniture manufacturing, quarries and brick yards.

concrete and masonry reservoir on the eastern summit of Skinner Butte in 1886. Reports indicate that a great deal of infrastructure, such as pipes and a rough access road to the summit, were constructed as part of this undertaking.

Shortly thereafter, between 1887 and 1888, Shelton commissioned the construction of his new mansion at the southern foot of Skinner Butte. His home is known today as the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House, and remains one of the most noteworthy historic homes in the area. In that same year, Shelton sold a half-acre of land to the University of Oregon for the construction of an observatory. In a very short period of time, therefore, Skinner Butte was transformed from a pastoral hill to the site of significant municipal, institutional and private construction.

Other enterprises contributed to this trend. In the early 1890s, the columnar basalt outcropping near the southwestern toe of the butte became a popular quarry site. Stone from this site was used frequently in early construction around Eugene - such as foundations and steps - until the quarry was abandoned sometime around the early 1930s.

As other homes were built around the eastern foot of the butte, for example the Ankeny House in 1896, the University of Oregon observatory was already beginning to outlive its purpose. The university soon discovered the drawbacks to an observatory located in the valley floor of western Oregon. Visibility proved to be very poor for most of the year due to cloud cover, fog, or smoke and haze settling in the valley. By 1897, the observatory was abandoned. The building was itself an interesting piece of architecture from a contemporary perspective, but as it fell into disrepair over the ensuing years, it was finally blasted from the hilltop with dynamite around 1905. A police communications tower stands today in the same location.

Around 1905, the Willamette Valley Company purchased the reservoir from Dr. Shelton and Associates. There was a subsequent push for public control of the

**Skinner Butte Park started off as an investment in public infrastructure**

## A Brief History of Skinner Butte Park

### *The Functional Butte*

Around 1880, most of Skinner Butte and the surrounding property was purchased by Dr. T.W. Shelton, who was subsequently granted the first water franchise by the City of Eugene. Shelton and his associates' new company, known as the Eugene Water Company (EWC), built a 300,000 gallon

*This picture shows the flood of February 4, 1890, from the east summit of Skinner Butte. Note the Ferry Street Bridge and the 1886 reservoir in the foreground.*





*This early print shows an artist's conception of Eugene growing up around Skinner Butte Park*

municipal water system that inevitably failed. Another larger, one million gallon reservoir was constructed on the butte the following year on the western summit of the butte. This reservoir, a monolith of concrete requiring train loads of materials to construct walls eight feet thick at the base, would endure well into the latter half of the century.

### ***The Transition to Public Ownership***

It took an epidemic to tip the scales of public opinion. In 1906, contaminated water in the municipal water system caused an outbreak of typhoid fever in Eugene. The State Board of Health reportedly described it as "the worst typhoid epidemic in the history of Oregon." The people rallied around a bid for public ownership of the water system, and in 1908, Eugene voters passed a bond to buy out the Willamette

Valley Company, creating in its place the Eugene Water Board (EWB). EWB, precursor of today's Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB), promised better service and a cleaner system.

Along with the purchase of the municipal water system infrastructure, including both reservoirs, EWB also became the new owner of the surrounding land. Skinner Butte was now public property. EWB, however, had no use for the entire property, and in 1914 recommended the dedication of about 67 acres as a public park. The voters embraced the proposal and approved a \$93,000 bond levy to take over the "non-operating" land. To dedicate the park, the city celebrated in a grand festival of fireworks and dancing. Thus, Skinner Butte Park was created.

### ***The Heyday***

In the following years, Skinner Butte Park experienced tremendous attention and popularity. This was a period of improvement and expansion, when the park enjoyed a particular distinction as the hub of local recreation and cultural activities, from car camping to festivals to the local swimming hole.

Several generations after the fires of the Kalapuya stopped, brush and poison oak had begun to grow densely across the flanks of the butte. This did not appeal to the aesthetics of the time, and crews were mustered by the newly formed Park Board

***Skinner Butte Park was dedicated on July 6, 1914***



*The car camp, shown here across Cheshire Avenue (formerly a section of the Applegate Trail), enjoyed great popularity in 1920's. Note the comfort station now known as Lamb Cottage in the background.*

*Hiking trails, such as this one photographed around 1915, have always been popular on Skinner Butte*



to clear brush and begin planting trees in beautification efforts. Reports indicate that hoses were run from the reservoirs to nurse the new trees through the dry months on the thin soils of the butte, and that blasting was done to make room for the trees in the shallow, basalt bedrock.

These beautification efforts, however, were not the only activity on the butte during this time. Even before the park's dedication, the University of Oregon erected a large, wooden "O" just below the current overlook area. This was one of the first such collegiate letters to be erected in the country, and has since been a target for an ongoing feud with the rival Oregon State University. Following suit, Eugene High School built a large "E" several hundred feet to the west in 1915.

The largest alteration, however, occurred when EWB commissioned the construction of a new, three million gallon reservoir in 1926. This new reservoir replaced the original masonry reservoir on the eastern summit of the butte, and eventually rendered obsolete the one million gallon reservoir that was left standing on the western summit. Even today the 1926 reservoir is still part of the City of Eugene's municipal water system.

After the passage of a \$10,000 bond measure for park improvements in 1920, and with the help of various local service groups contributing labor and materials, park facilities were greatly expanded. The automobile had arrived in American culture, and brought more and more visitors to the park. The road to the top of the butte was improved, and a summit overlook developed. Many drove up the butte for a view of Eugene and the surrounding landscape, and many more joined in the recently popularized pastime of car camping in the meadow north of Skinner Butte, which was officially acquired by the City in 1928. Lamb Cottage was constructed as an open-air comfort station to serve the campers, and a small general store opened for business along Cheshire Street. Hot summer days drew crowds of locals to the banks of the Willamette at what had become the favorite swimming hole. The swimming area included a bath house, docks and water wheels, while life guards kept watch. Residents also used the new picnic and playground facilities, or played baseball on the old diamond near the river. The park even offered a small zoo exhibit with a variety of local animals such as bears, raccoons, skunks and birds, as well as exotic animals like monkeys.

One ambitious outgrowth of this attention occurred in 1928, during the height of Skinner Butte Park's heyday, through the commissioning of a master plan by a landscape architect from Portland. The plan showed a grand staircase and promenade from the end of Willamette Street, across the railroad tracks and straight up the south side of Skinner Butte to the summit, where a pergola and rows of trees framed a graceful automobile plaza crowned by a lighthouse tower. The promenade continued down the north side of the butte through terraced gardens and ended in an ornate pavilion and pool extending to the banks of the Willamette River. Less than one year later, the stock market crash of 1929 and the beginning of the depression erased whatever hopes may have existed for realizing this elaborate vision. Earlier park developments that the 1928 plan sought to emphasize, including

**Skinner Butte Park received much attention and construction during the 1920s, and was a focal point for the community**





a modest path leading from the train station to the summit, and a few trails through the forest on the north side of the butte, are all that would be realized.

### ***The Depression***

As the economy collapsed, interest in improving the park flagged until the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) established a regional base in Skinner Butte Park in 1933. Dubbed “Camp Skinner,” this extensive facility was located in the former car camping and picnic area, and served as a hub for the regional efforts of the CCC as well as office headquarters for the Work Progress Administration (WPA) and the National Youth Administration (NYA). Some of Camp Skinner’s buildings are still in use today near Cheshire Avenue and Lincoln Street. Along with many other projects around the Eugene area, the CCC undertook the construction of the basalt retaining walls and stairways on the north side of Skinner Butte, and cleared picnic areas. Although the camp closed less than a year later, transient workers for the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA) moved into the vacated buildings and continued the park improvement work. The old stone fireplace that still stands at the northeast foot of the butte is testimony to their work, along with other road building and landscaping projects.

As another symptom of a growing, industrialized society, the Willamette River was closed to swimming in the 1930s. The water quality had become so poor from upstream sewage and industrial pollutants

that it was deemed unfit for human contact. The old swimming hole was vacated and the bath house, docks and other structures removed.

Another beautification effort was undertaken on Armistice Day in 1934 to plant trees on the butte. A 24-foot high wooden cross, outlined in red neon, was also erected on the top of the butte in 1936, setting the stage for a controversy that would last for decades.

Controversy had also broken out over the marker commemorating the original location of Eugene Skinner’s cabin that had been placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1906 on Second Avenue at the alley between Lincoln Street and Lawrence Street. Phoebe Skinner Kinsley, daughter of Eugene and Mary Skinner, was born in the cabin in 1850. She had become convinced that the original marker was placed in the wrong location, and initiated an effort to place a new marker across from the old quarry site. In 1930, Phoebe and the DAR placed the new marker. Today, this marker has been retired to the Lane County Historical Museum for safekeeping, and has been replaced by a new one constructed with the help of the Eugene Rotary Club. The debate continues, however, as to the exact location of the original cabin.

### ***The Local Parks Revolution***

The 1940s saw the beginning of renewed enthusiasm for park improvements. Fred Lamb, the parks superintendent in the early 1940s, oversaw the clearing of more picnic

*Camp Skinner, shown here in 1933, brought a new wave of civic improvements to the park*

***Once a major community swimming area, the Willamette River in Skinner Butte Park was closed to swimming in the 1930s due to pollution***



**Many improvements  
in Skinner Butte Park  
were funded by  
bond levies over  
several decades**

areas north of the butte. The open-air comfort station built for the car camp of the 1920s was renamed Lamb Cottage in his honor. Also, around 1945, temporary housing was built in the area of Lincoln Street and Cheshire Avenue for veterans returning from World War II. Some of these structures were later converted into city offices, and today house the City of Eugene Facility Management Division.

Year-round, citywide recreation activities began seriously in 1946 with the hiring of Don January as the new full-time parks superintendent. Through a cooperative effort with local and regional government and citizens groups, plans and programming were developed for many major parks in the city parks system, and were supported by an enthusiastic community through donations of time and materials. In 1948 a \$2 million tax levy was passed by the voters for parks. This levy helped to fund, among other projects, the construction of an underground irrigation system, lawns, playground equipment and picnic facilities in Skinner Butte Park.

Shortly thereafter, in 1951, another \$1 million dollar levy was passed. During the next decade, W. Riley (Tex) Matsler, the new parks superintendent, oversaw further improvements funded in part through this levy. Skinner Butte Park received two new picnic areas, remodeling of Lamb Cottage, reconstruction of roads and sidewalks, repair and new construction of zoo facilities, parking areas and more lawn. The overlook on top of the butte was also reconstructed, and remains much the same today. Also, in 1955, reports also indicate that property was purchased to expand Skinner Butte Park in an area north of Cheshire Avenue and east of Lincoln Street.

This trend of incremental improvements was continued into the 1960s with the passage of yet another bond levy in 1961. In 1967, major improvements were undertaken in the heart of the park near Cheshire and Lincoln, including the development of a new playground, restroom and path system. This development remains largely unchanged today.

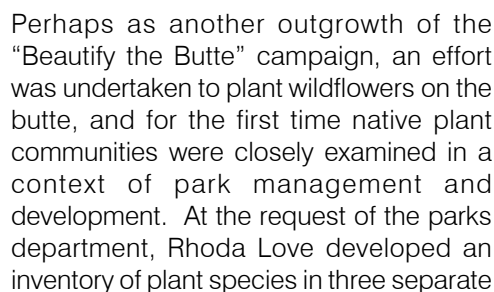
Also during this time, the remnants of buildings associated with metal forge used by the NYA during the Camp Skinner days were converted to a park maintenance shop and headquarters near Lincoln Street and First Avenue (an area known as "Lincoln Yard"). Other warehouse buildings were moved into the Lincoln Yard area from east of Lamb Cottage and elsewhere. Today these buildings are still used as storage and offices for a special unit of the Eugene Police Department.

In 1967, a citizen committee dubbed the "Metropolitan Civic Club" conducted a major research and planning effort for Skinner Butte. This planning effort stemmed from recent, dramatic changes around the butte, and resulted in the largest public involvement effort that had been undertaken up to that time. A host of grand ideas were put forward at this time, in addition to a clear set of guidelines and recommendations for the butte. This planning effort did not include the entire park, but limited its focus to Skinner Butte itself. Although this effort probably catalyzed subsequent interest in the park, funding to implement the recommendations visions never materialized.

### ***An Environmental Awakening***

Around the 1970s, a shift in thinking began to make its way into the planning and development of Skinner Butte Park. This shift had already begun in the late 1960s, and is evidenced by the guidelines and recommendations of the Metropolitan Civic Club planning effort that seem to show a community preference for values of natural beauty and passive recreation. An awakening environmental ethic and an awareness of dramatic changes in the park (e.g. invasive plant species, river health and erosion) built on the earliest ideas of Skinner Butte Park as a place of "natural beauty," and began to favor a more subtle and restorative approach to park development.

With this development, the focus of access and enjoyment of the park began to shift away from the automobile. Although most visitors today still arrive in the park by car, almost 90% of park visitors report using the bike path. Today's planning policy and urban design standards are reinforcing this trend towards less dependence on the automobile and more emphasis on alternative transportation.



*This sketch, from the early 1970s shows a cross section of the current river banks stabilization methods used in the park*

categories of plant communities on Skinner Butte. In her report, she highlighted the tremendous threat that English ivy and other invasive plant species had begun to pose to the native plant communities, and recommended that these invasive species be “removed or drastically controlled.”

The site’s cultural history experienced a revival in the early 1970s when volunteers and donors sponsored the construction of a replica of Skinner’s Cabin. The cabin was presented to the city in a celebration of history, and took its place at the northern foot of Skinner Butte. The original cabin location, while not exactly known, was outside of park property and had been long since developed. By 1996, it became apparent that the cabin would not withstand the damp, shady conditions on the north side of the butte for much longer, and it was restored and moved to a new, sunnier location near the playground and restroom and closer to where Skinner may have originally built his cabin. Once again, volunteers and community sponsors such as the Applegate Trail Committee, helped restore the cabin and add an interpretive kiosk, and it was rededicated with another celebration of history. Today, the cabin replica is a popular attraction for history enthusiasts and followers of the Applegate Trail.

### **The Modern Era**

After decades of more or less continual improvement and expansion, Skinner Butte Park saw relatively few projects in the 1980s and 1990s. This is mostly due to a dramatic decline in funding to support park development and maintenance that marked these years. Aside from extensive

volunteer projects undertaken by the Eugene Rotary club on Skinner Butte in the late 1990s, most of the recreational facilities remained unchanged throughout this period.

Traffic issues became more of a concern within the park in the 1980s. Following a study that documented high speed and traffic volumes along Cheshire Avenue, a traffic diverter was installed to help slow things down. Although the diverter did reduce traffic, it funneled traffic through a parking lot frequented by children visiting the playground. After a few years, the diverter was removed due to safety concerns.

Partly in response to neighborhood concerns about high traffic flow on Jefferson Street, a proposal was drafted later in the 1980s to connect Cheshire Avenue to Jefferson Street and Owen Rose Garden under the existing I-105 underpass. A block of land north of Cheshire and east of Lincoln was acquired and several homes were cleared in anticipation of constructing the extension. The plans for the connector, however, were rejected by the Whiteaker neighborhood and subsequently abandoned.

The debate over the large cross that had been present on Skinner Butte since the 1930s, having come to a head some thirty years previous, flared up again in the 1990s. In 1962, the second wooden cross to adorn the butte blew down in the Columbus Day storm. Debate raged within the community over whether or not to replace it. In the middle of the night in 1963, a large, concrete cross appeared mysteriously on the butte. After much debate and a showing of support from the community, the cross was legitimized by action of the City Council. The battle continued in the courts for decades, and in 1997, the cross was finally removed by legal order. Two years later, through generous community donations and volunteer efforts, a large American flag and overlook was constructed in place of the cross as a legally-sanctioned veteran’s memorial.

*In the 1980s, plans called for a connection to Owen Rose Garden by extending Cheshire Avenue under I-105 to Jefferson Street*





## CHAPTER 3: INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT

### Introduction

With a pre-historical and historical perspective, we're better able to understand Skinner Butte Park as we see it today. It is a complex picture, and one that is influenced by thousands of people and the changing ideas, attitudes and needs of generations of Eugene residents. This snapshot, taken as the master plan is developed, must serve as the base line from which we move into the future. What is it, then, that we see today?

### Natural Resources

Several distinct types of habitat are present in Skinner Butte Park. Although the natural areas are characteristically urban, existing in varying degrees of integrity and succession, each currently provides an important component of habitat in the downtown Eugene area. The five main habitat types (See Map 4) are typical of natural areas that occur frequently throughout the region, and for decades have been used as a classroom and learning opportunity for local residents.

#### **The North-Side Forest:**

*Occurring primarily on the north side of Skinner Butte, this area is characterized by mature Douglas fir up to 150 years old (or older), bigleaf maple and younger grand fir. In the absence of disturbance and fire, this area is succeeding towards a mixed forest of hardwood and true fir. The middle story is composed largely of osoberry with*

*scattered hazelnut, serviceberry and ninebark, with an understory of sword fern and various perennials such as false Solomon's seal and trillium.*

#### **Remnant Oak Savanna Transition:**

*Primarily occurring along the southern edge of the north-side forest, from the western edge of the butte across the summit to the eastern edge of the butte, this transition zone is characterized by both young and mature Oregon white oak, several madrone, and an understory of snowberry, poison oak, ninebark, hazelnut and serviceberry. This habitat type, a remnant of once common to the Willamette Valley and representing what probably existed in some areas on Skinner Butte, is slowly disappearing as Douglas fir begins to take hold around the oak trees. This transition to a Douglas fir forest is representative of a common sight around the region, and is valuable as an example of an indigenous habitat type that has become largely extinct.*

#### **Upland Prairie:**

*Two small areas of remnant savanna prairie exist on Skinner Butte: one on the western face of the butte above "The Columns" climbing area, and one on the eastern face of the butte between the EWEB reservoir and the East Skinner Butte Historic District. These areas are characterized by steep, rocky slopes populated by some remnant native grasses, including Romer's fescue, and numerous native forbes and grasses. A plant survey of the western area conducted by Salix Associates in the spring*



of 2000 indicates a high level of diversity and the presence of several species of native plants that have become locally uncommon. Upland savanna prairie is also an endangered habitat type, and highly valuable for preservation.

#### **South Skinner Butte Mixed Forest:**

Much of this area is in transition from the original upland prairie habitat towards a mixed hardwood and conifer forest. Some of this transition is occurring through the natural succession of native trees and shrubs, although a larger percentage is as a result of human activity in conjunction with beautification projects, as well as the rapid advance of invasive species. Forest types include dense groves of incense cedar, stands of bigleaf and Norway maple, Mazard cherry, Douglas fir, madrone, giant sequoia, pine and others. Other areas are dominated by thickets of predominantly invasive species such as English hawthorn, Scotch broom and Himalayan blackberry. Mostly because these forested areas are young, they do not support the diversity of native plants characteristic of older, native forest. A seed bed of dormant native upland prairie species lies beneath the many areas of the transitional forest and dense cover of invasive species. Previous restoration work has shown that some upland prairie species return quickly when the covering vegetation is removed.

#### **Willamette River:**

A significant stretch of riverbank habitat extends along the northern boundary of the park. This zone varies in width from several feet to several hundred feet, and includes good examples of a diversity of structural features and habitats common to the Willamette River, such as fluvial terraces, a seasonal island, gravel bars and a small backwater slough. Vegetation in this area is dominated by willow, dogwood and alder along the more stable river bank edges, large cottonwood throughout the terrace areas, and mature bigleaf maple, Douglas fir and Oregon white oak on the steep bank between the upper and lower terrace, and along the edge of the upper terrace. Several significant tree specimens are found in this area. Understory vegetation includes snowberry, osoberry, and ninebark and a

range of native herbaceous species. Much of the riparian zone is also dominated by invasive species such as Himalayan blackberry, English ivy and reed canary grass.

### **A Landscape Under Siege**

Skinner Butte Park is under attack by invasive plants. Most of us don't recognize them for what they are. But they're here, and new invasive species are arriving every day. Every native landscape in the world is undergoing the same kinds of dramatic change, but in an urban area with a mild climate, good soils and plenty of water, the effects are dramatic.

The changes are easy to see when you know what to look for. The forest on the north side of Skinner Butte is covered with a carpet of dark green, glossy English ivy. This ivy has spread enormously in recent decades, and has threatened to literally choke the life out of the forest and other native habitats. Ivy covers the ground and robs native plants of light, and competes for nutrients and water. Most native plants are suppressed under the green carpet. What was once a diverse forest floor of annuals, perennials, ferns and wildflowers is smothered, along with the creatures that depend on them. The ivy also grows quickly high into the branches of trees, reaching towards the light and eventually shading out and killing the host tree.

For several years, efforts have been underway to control the ivy. Crews have concentrated on removing it from the trees, cutting the stems where they sprout up from the forest floor. Other groups of volunteers, botanists and ecologists are experimenting with removing ivy from the ground. New evidence shows that, once the carpet of ivy is taken away, the native plants are quick to return. This is good news for forest habitats in many city parks, including Hendricks Park, where aggressive, organized efforts are underway to control ivy in the park by the year 2010.

Other invasive plants are contributing to the decline of Skinner Butte Park's native ecosystems. Plants like Himalayan blackberry, Portugal laurel, English laurel,



North Side Forest



Remnant Oak Savanna Transition



Upland Prairie



South Skinner Butte Mixed Forest



Willamette River

*English ivy, shown here, can spread quickly throughout the landscape by birds. Ideally, ivy should be controlled before it has a chance to set fruit.*



Scotch broom, English hawthorn and Norway maple are quickly taking over large areas of the butte and river banks. Today, very little remains of the original habitats that were once plentiful within the park. Although there are a number of factors that contribute to this, including management, development and human use, the threat posed by invasive plants is seen as perhaps the greatest.

Invasive plants cause other, more human-related problems, as well. Almost always, the areas that people perceive as most dark and unfriendly are dominated by invasive plants. As a result, legitimate users tend to shy away from natural areas in the park, and these areas are frequently given over to undesirable uses such as illegal camping, drinking and drug use. Studies have shown that humans have an affinity for the natural beauty of healthy, diverse, native plant communities. Interestingly,

*Current erosion control includes armoring banks with riprap as shown here. This is seen as an emergency measure. Non-structural reinforcement improves habitat and is the preferred method.*



people are naturally drawn to these areas and feel refreshed and comforted by them. Likewise they are repelled by dark, crowded areas of low biological diversity. A certain amount of the discomfort associated with overgrown or invasive-dominated natural areas in the park may be related to this phenomenon.

### **Riverbank Stabilization**

Since the construction of the I-105 freeway in 1962, the banks of the Willamette River in the western portion of Skinner Butte Park have been rapidly eroding. To construct the freeway, a portion of the north river bank was extended into the river and armored with rip-rap, thus increasing the speed of water flow through this area and directing it towards the south bank. Several flood events triggered large-scale erosion along this bank. A typical pattern occurs when a large cottonwood tree is undercut and falls into the river, leaving a large gap of exposed soil on the high bank. High water forms an eddy in the gap that accelerates the forces of erosion in a downstream direction. Several efforts have been undertaken to correct this problem, including the installation of gabion baskets (rock-filled wire baskets) in the early 1970s, and an emergency stabilization project using rip-rap in the later 1990s. Although the more recent effort appears to be resisting the forces of erosion, the gabion baskets appear to be undercut and are in danger of failure.

A long-term solution to this problem will be necessary to protect the park from further erosion. Current management policies for riparian areas, including those associated with the listing of native Willamette River salmon species through the Endangered Species Act, discourage the use of structural stabilization techniques such as rip-rap and gabions. Non-structural stabilization such as terracing and planting of stabilizing vegetation is a preferred method that helps increase riparian and aquatic habitat value. In particular, the creation of lower flood terraces is known to provide refuge and salmon fry migrating towards the ocean.



## Salmon Recovery

The decline of salmon and steelhead runs in northwest rivers is another story with roots in the arrival of Euro-American immigrants (see Chapter 2). Two major factors have contributed to this. One is a decline in water quality, which began with agriculture and logging. These activities released soil into the water, and contributed to flooding and dramatic cutting of stream beds. Other effects of agriculture include high levels of nutrients flowing into the river from livestock, and, later in the 20th century, widespread use of fertilizers and pesticides. Urbanization and industry such as paper mills have also greatly impacted the river through chemical toxins, sewage, oil and gasoline from cars, and increased runoff from paving and buildings.

The other major factor contributing to the decline of salmon is the rapid disappearance of diverse habitat needed by salmon during different stages of their life cycle. While early logging practices destroyed breeding areas in upland streams, the Willamette River has also been changed dramatically by construction of numerous flood control and hydroelectric dams. Over the years, the channel has been transformed through engineered banks and dams from a meandering, mile-wide system of diverse sloughs, gravel bars and flood plains, to a single channel (a process called "channelization"), often flanked by urban development or agriculture (see "Riverbank Stabilization," this chapter). This drastically reduced the amount of other aquatic habitat types needed by salmon - in particular young salmon.

The cumulative effect of these factors has been devastating to salmon populations, and in March of 1999, the spring Chinook salmon in the upper Willamette River basin was listed as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act. The final protective rules for the Upper Willamette Spring Chinook were published on July 10, 2000 and became effective on January 8, 2001.

In November 1999, the City of Eugene formed the Eugene ESA/Salmon Team to proactively look for ways to protect and aid the recovery of listed salmon species. Among the many City programs and policies that already contribute towards a healthy river, the Salmon Team was charged with assessing habitat, and reviewing City activities and City policies. For more information see the Eugene/ESA Salmon Recovery Program at <http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/salmon>.

Given the reduction in the river's overall complexity through channelization, a higher burden is placed on the remaining riverbank areas to realize plans for salmon recovery. Skinner Butte Park lies adjacent to a stretch of the Willamette River nearly a mile long.

Particularly in an urban area, this provides a good opportunity to contribute to the health of the aquatic ecosystem. The use and management of land near the river affects aquatic habitat through water quality and the transfer of healthy levels of nutrients into the aquatic system. Development efforts recommended through the master plan should proactively respond to these issues both in terms of land use and the details of construction.

Perhaps more importantly, the park's prominent location near downtown, as well as its diversity of habitat types, make Skinner Butte Park an excellent place to educate the community about the relationship of human use and management of land to salmon recovery and water quality issues in general. Clearly, the basis for change in the community must be effected through its individuals. Basic concepts, such as how salmon use the lower river terraces, why salmon are present in the river year-round, how land use affects water quality and habitat, and how the river we see today has changed over the last 150 years, are all good candidates for interpretation in the park.

***Skinner Butte Park provides a good opportunity to contribute to the health of the aquatic ecosystem, and to educate the community about salmon recovery***





*The Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House, shown here in the late 19th century, is an important and charismatic example of Skinner Butte Park's important cultural resources*

**Skinner Butte Park is unquestionably the most historically significant of Eugene's parks**

## Cultural Resources

As the birthplace of the city and the modern community, Skinner Butte Park itself is a unique historical resource. Unquestionably, it is the most historically significant resource in the Eugene park system. There are also a number of significant cultural resources that persist within Skinner Butte Park, the most prominent of which are described in the Oregon Cultural Resource Inventory as follows:

- » The Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House
- » Lamb Cottage
- » The big "O"
- » The big "E"
- » W 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Skinner's Cabin Marker
- » Lincoln Street Skinner's Cabin Marker (replaced)
- » Basalt quarry
- » Skinner Butte (EWEB) Reservoir (1926)
- » Basalt wall

Other cultural resources, such as the cross, the original Lincoln Street cabin marker and the old reservoirs have been removed or replaced. Still other features, such as the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial and the Lane County Veteran's of Foreign Wars Memorial, have contemporary cultural

value but are not old enough to be of historic significance. There may also be other cultural resources in the park that exist but are not cataloged. These resources are key to the function and role of the park as a cultural foundation for the community, and are particularly valuable for their public accessibility. Most of these features are not interpreted, and represent an opportunity to expand public knowledge of Eugene's cultural heritage.

### **Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House**

Situated on the southern foot of Skinner Butte, this is perhaps the most well-known and significant of the park's cultural resources. The house, completed in 1888 by Dr. Thomas Shelton, marks the north-south axis of the city, and is among the most significant historic homes in the region. The Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson (SMJ) House and associated tax lot are managed cooperatively by various departments of the City of Eugene and the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House Associates, a private not-for-profit group organizing special community and history-related events, interpretation and general maintenance of the house. The house represents tremendous potential as a focus for history-related aspects of the park, and as a gateway to the park from the downtown area.

The SMJ House Historic Landscape Master Plan (see Ch. 4) outlines numerous, detailed recommendations for improvements to enhance the function and landscape history of this area, and should be evaluated for implementation. For example, the sixty-foot wide right-of-way aligned with Willamette Street serves as the south access to Skinner Butte Park, as well as alternative access to the SMJ House. Parking for both trail users and visitors to the SMJ House is currently inadequate, and the situation will continue unless the City is able to acquire additional land in this area. Ya-Po-Ah Terrace, a retirement community adjacent to the SMJ House, owns vacant land just south of the SMJ House, north of the 3rd/4th Connector, and contiguous with the Willamette Street right-of-way. The SMJ



House Historic Landscape Master Plan points out that an opportunity exists for the City to negotiate with property owners to see if shared parking, or a purchase of the land, could be arranged to facilitate the parking needs of the SMJ House and the park in the future.

### ***Skinner’s Cabin and Applegate Trail***

The only modern interpretations of the cultural heritage of the site, the Skinner’s Cabin replica and the Applegate Trail Interpretive Center, have been successful introductions into the park. Built through volunteer efforts and partnerships, including the Applegate Trail Committee and Eugene Rotary Club, these interpretive features draw visitors from outside of the region as part of the story of western Euro-American settlement. They are generally accepted as among the most site-appropriate uses for Skinner Butte park, and serve as the cornerstone for future expansion of education about regional history and pre-history.

### ***East-Skinner Butte Historic District***

The eastern foot of Skinner Butte is the oldest designated historic residential district in the city of Eugene. Here, early settlers of the region built homes above the muddy valley floor that are among the most historically significant and intact within the city. Designation as a historic district places a high priority on the preservation of this neighborhood’s historic integrity. As an abutting land use, the park should respect and, where possible, enhance this aspect

### ***Public Art***

Two significant piece of public art are present in the park. The “whale” sculptures, dating from the late 1950s, are a remnant of an early playground just west of Lamb Cottage. The “Solar System” project, which stretches along the bike path system, is represented in Skinner Butte Park by the planets Saturn and Jupiter. These art pieces are maintained through a plan established by the Facility Management Division.

## **Park Facilities**

Skinner Butte Park offers a variety of basic park furniture and amenities, including a playground, a restroom, picnic areas, benches, lights, drinking fountains and trash receptacles as well as a variety of unique features (see Map 2: Existing Site Features).

### ***Ball Field***

A small, informal softball field represents the only organized sports-type facility in Skinner Butte Park. Although this field is too small and irregular for scheduled or competitive use, public comments and stakeholder interviews have revealed that it is useful for non-programmed, informal games in association with family events and social occasions held at the nearby park core picnic area. Also, historic reports indicate that the ball field was used prior to the park’s dedication in 1914, lending it a sense of historic significance. It is unknown if the field is still in its original location.

### ***Aging Infrastructure***

Many recreational facilities in the park have outlived their life expectancy, having changed little over several decades. This is evident to some extent in most areas of the park, as emphasized by chipped or broken equipment, crooked tables, bent or leaning light poles, uneven or broken pavement and other visible symptoms of age.

Given the prognosis for growth and a regional need for quality park infrastructure, this is a significant concern for the future functionality of the park. In addition, similar to the psychological effects of impacted natural environments (see “Natural Resources”, this chapter), the condition of the built environment will inevitably affect the culture of the park. It is possible that the condition of the infrastructure in Skinner Butte Park contributes to the kinds of uses that take place there. Well-maintained, quality infrastructure, therefore, is necessary not only for the functionality of the park, but also to develop a positive culture promoting frequent, legitimate use.

***Many facilities in Skinner Butte Park have outlived their life expectancy***

### **Main Areas of Traditional Park Facilities**

- ▶ Main “park core” picnic and playground area across from the facilities buildings, north of Cheshire Avenue
- ▶ Skinner Butte summit and overlook area
- ▶ Picnic area above the historic stone wall at the north foot of Skinner Butte.

### **Special Park Facilities**

- ▶ Campbell Senior Center and wood shop
- ▶ Shelton-McMurphy-Johnson House
- ▶ Skinner’s cabin replica and Applegate Trail Interpretive Center
- ▶ Lamb Cottage
- ▶ “The Columns” climbing area

### **Other Facilities with Non-Park Uses**

- ▶ Facility Management Division offices, shop and storage buildings
- ▶ The Lincoln Yard
- ▶ Child Care, Inc.
- ▶ Emergency communications tower on Skinner Butte
- ▶ EWEB reservoir

There are also some relatively new features in the park, such as the Campbell Senior Center, and the Skinner's cabin replica. These features are more in keeping with a desirable image for the park, and set a good precedent for future improvements.

## Transportation and Access

As a recreational hub for the downtown area, and a major node on the urban Willamette Greenway system, circulation and access are an important consideration for Skinner Butte Park. Multi-modal access is already reasonably accommodated in the park, primarily through the bike path, and users report arriving by a number of different means. According to the citywide survey, nearly 60% of park users arrive by car, while about 35% report arriving by bicycle. Only about one in ten visitors walk to the park, which indicates a need for better connection to downtown and neighborhoods.

### Vehicular Access

Skinner Butte Park is primarily accessed by vehicle through Cheshire Avenue as the main east-west thoroughfare, connected by High Street at the east end and by Lawrence and Washington streets at the west end. The summit of Skinner Butte is

accessed by Skinner Butte Loop, connecting with Lincoln Street to the west and Third Avenue to the east. No data for traffic volumes is available.

Although there are several vehicular access routes, the park can be difficult to find and navigate by car for anyone unfamiliar with the area. A lack of good signage and poor visual connection to downtown or major roads are contributing factors. Despite its relative remoteness, the park has experienced problems in recent decades with high traffic volumes and speed, particularly on Cheshire Avenue. Wide travel lanes, up to 15 feet, contribute to high traffic speeds on Cheshire. Currently, raised crosswalks at several locations help slow traffic and increase pedestrian safety along this street.

With the exception of the High Street access, vehicular access points to the park tend to be unattractive and are not marked or celebrated. The Lincoln Street and Washington Street access points are among the least attractive. Lincoln Street appears to be among the most popular access routes to Skinner Butte, whereas Washington Street is a logical main entry to Cheshire Avenue and the west end of the park. Lawrence Street is less attractive as a main access route because it bisects the east Whiteaker neighborhood.

### Bicycle Access

The riverbank bike path provides excellent bicycle access to Skinner Butte Park. The bike path has been continually expanded and improved over the years, most recently through the addition of the new DeFazio bridge just east of the park, and other bicycle connection improvements associated with the Ferry Street Bridge project. Many bicyclists also use the bike path along Washington to access the riverbank route via the access path near the Child Care Inc. building. Nearly 9 out of 10 park visitors report using the bike path, even if they arrive by vehicle to use the park as a jump-off point to access the rest of the bike path and greenway system. The bike path is shared by walkers, runners, roller bladers and others. Conflicts have been reported in the more congested areas

**The citywide survey shows the bike path as the most frequently used facility in Skinner Butte Park**

*The South Bank Trail portion of the Riverbank Trail System, shown here in Skinner Butte Park, is a major alternative transportation corridor and citywide recreational amenity*



of the park, for example near the playground and picnic area. This may indicate a need for greater awareness among path users, speed regulation features, and/or separation of bicycles and other travel modes.

Bicycle access to the park from other areas is less convenient. Bicyclists accessing the butte summit have reported conflicts with car traffic on the narrow, unmarked roads. Among the least convenient of access routes is from downtown, where no clear avenue exists to the park. Visitors wishing to enter the park from downtown must find their way around the railroad tracks to the east or west, then continue relatively long distances through neighborhood areas before entering the park. There is also a lack of adequate bike racks and bicycle-oriented signage in the park.

### **Pedestrian Access**

Pedestrian access to Skinner Butte Park is generally adequate where bicycle access is also convenient. The South Bank Trail and the Washington Street connection through Washington Jefferson Park are the most easily accessible pedestrian entry points.

There is, however, no clear pedestrian connection from downtown to the park. Historically, an unofficial pedestrian access route has existed from the north end of Willamette Street, across the railroad tracks and the recently developed parking lot north of the tracks, to the trail access point near the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House. Since the city was laid out in the 1850s, with

*Many pedestrians use Lincoln Street to access the park in the absence of a good alternative*



Willamette Street as the main north-south axis between the summit of Skinner Butte and Spencer Butte, there have been several official attempts to implement a safe pedestrian avenue along this historic, clearly intuitive route. Although this route is still used, as evidenced by the worn paths and recurring damage to fences, it is currently unsafe and generally discouraged by the railroad and other property owners. Developing this path remains the single most important opportunity for connecting downtown Eugene with Skinner Butte Park.

An extensive network of trails exists on the butte and along the river bank that provide pedestrian access to the butte summit and through various natural areas. Although these trails are used frequently, they are generally in very poor condition. Packed dirt surfaces become muddy in the winter and are prone to erosion, and several main trail routes developed by the CCC in the 1930s have also been severely worn. Due to both poor trail conditions and lack of trail signs, many cutoffs exist that denude native vegetation, cause compaction and exacerbate erosion. Many unofficial trails also exist throughout natural areas on the butte and along the river that are frequented primarily by homeless and illegal campers. Currently, many report feeling unsafe when using the trail system. It is likely that the lack of signage, poor trail conditions, overgrowth of invasive vegetation and negative use patterns together contribute to an unsafe feeling in areas of the trail system.

*The connection from Skinner Butte Park to Willamette Street, shown here, was originally intended as the main entrance to the park. The access is currently cut off by parking lots and railroad tracks.*

**Skinner Butte Park needs a better connection to downtown**



*This view faces south from the summit of Skinner Butte towards Spencer Butte. The relationship between downtown Eugene and Skinner Butte Park is very important to both the city and the park*



## Context and Surrounding Areas

The city of Eugene, quite literally, grew up around Skinner Butte Park. Over the past 150 years, the area that is now Skinner Butte Park has been surrounded by a diverse and rapidly changing landscape. What began as native prairie gave way to agriculture, and eventually to industry. Today, the park exists surrounded by elements of each of these.

### Downtown

Skinner Butte Park is within reach for people who work in the downtown area, and provides important relief and relaxation during lunchtime, and before and after work hours. As downtown develops as an active urban and mixed use center, this function will become more important. Similarly, the park has tremendous potential to serve as an easily-accessible recreational experience and orientation point for visitors to Eugene staying in the downtown area. Skinner Butte Park is a likely focus for

visitors wishing to assess the quality of the community, and therefore and is an important investment for the local economy and job markets.

Skinner Butte, and to a lesser degree the rest of Skinner Butte Park, is an important element in the character of downtown Eugene. It visually anchors the city center when seen from many local viewpoints such as College Hill, Spencer Butte, the south hills and the freeway. The natural character of the butte, which has often emerged as an important theme in management discussions over the years, sets off a pleasing contrast to urban development and helps lend Eugene its “green” appeal.

Seen from the other direction, downtown is also an essential part of the experience of Skinner Butte Park. From the butte, one gains a vantage point over the urban center in the foreground, surrounded in the distance by the ridgeline and south hills. Once again it is the juxtaposition of urban and natural, seen from within the naturalistic environment of the park, that is particularly important. The urban elements of downtown, however, impact the park in unavoidable ways. The process of industrialization brought the railroad, highways and cars, power lines and lights that are an inescapable part of the park experience.

### Neighborhoods

The park is bordered to the southeast by the East Skinner Butte Historic District (see “Cultural Resources,” this chapter), and to the southwest by the Whiteaker Neighborhood. The park serves a “neighborhood park” function to residents in both areas, and is adequately equipped to do so. The family, civic and passive recreational aspects of Skinner Butte Park make it a good neighbor, offering relatively few negative impacts often associated with active recreational facilities such as sports fields. Although special events may cause parking overflow into neighborhood areas, regular park use typically does not.

**Skinner Butte Park provides important relief, recreation and relaxation for people who live and work downtown**



## Agricultural Remnants

Two community gardens operate just downstream from the Skinner Butte Park. In the 1970s, the park itself hosted a third community garden, as well as a private floral nursery in an area since cleared for the Cheshire Avenue extension (see Chapter 2). In addition, the Owen Rose Garden continues to flourish just west of the park on the other side of the I-105 bridge. These botanical and agricultural remnants reflect the early culture of Euro-American settlers who were drawn to the area for its rich soils and mild climate, and continue to bear their influence on the development of the park. As one example, the Campbell Senior Center offers an attractive floral display for its patrons, and as a backdrop for private occasions.

## Skinner Butte Mixed-Use Area

This industrially-zoned area at the southwest foot of Skinner Butte is largely composed of older industrial and commercial buildings of moderate size. Examples of uses include wholesale storage and distribution, auto body repair, electrical supply, machine shops, etc., as well as small commercial uses such as offices, a cafe, music store, etc. Most industrial uses are not ideally compatible with a public park, and tend to detract from the character of the Lincoln Street entrance to the park. Following a redistricting procedure, however, this area has experienced a recent trend of newer commercial uses, such as REI, which are more compatible with the park. High-density residential and mixed use are well suited development types for this area, including the Lincoln Yard area, in terms of park compatibility.

## Public Infrastructure

Before the construction of I-105, the experience of Skinner Butte Park would have certainly been more pleasing than it is today. The noise from the freeway is significant, both from the east-west section across the river, and from the north-south section along the western edge of the park.

Similarly, the Ferry Street Bridge borders the park on the east side. This, along with the new DeFazio pedestrian bridge, helps define the boundaries of the park with

interesting architectural elements. Unlike the I-105 bridge, they also provide good access to and from the park for car, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Noise from car traffic on the bridge does, however, also impact the park.

Conversely, Skinner Butte Park provides an attractive view for people traveling these major roads. For many people entering the community via Coburg Road or I-105, Skinner Butte Park is an important and inviting landmark.

Other elements of public infrastructure surround the park, including the EWEB offices and facilities just east of the park. The presence of these facilities, including the reservoir located in the park, is a reminder of Skinner Butte's practical role in the early development of the community. Although these elements are often seen as detracting from the park experience, there is potential to embrace them through interpretation.

On the other bank of the Willamette River, commercial and office development has created a more urban edge. Although some opinions suggest that this detracts from the park experience, it is also an interesting and successful contrast. The mix of urban and natural landscapes is beneficial to the livability of the city. Similarly, the park provides an attractive and inviting view from the development on the north bank of the river.

**Public infrastructure both defines and impacts the park**

*The Ferry Street Bridge helps define the park, provide access and add an interesting architectural element. Traffic noise, however, detracts from the park experience.*



## CHAPTER 4: CURRENT USE, POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

### Introduction

With the history and physical context of the park in mind, it is important to consider the most critical element of any park: people. Skinner Butte Park serves a function in our community. It is affected by, and created by, those who use it and those who manage it. To determine the best possible future for the park, therefore, it is important to understand how these influences are working today. This chapter will discuss the elements of human influence on the park, from park users to daily park management to the policy that governs both. It will also examine some current park trends, and how they may affect the planning direction for Skinner Butte Park.

### Role and Function

#### ***Unique Resource***

Through various shifts in culture and perception, Skinner Butte Park has remained a vital hub for the city's park system for nearly a century. For many reasons, as discussed elsewhere, the park has and is still a focus for the local community as a whole; a place of common ground and common heritage. This is a fundamental part of defining what is now considered a "metropolitan park." The other key piece of this definition hinges upon the presence of resources that are unique within the system. A diversity of unique values, such as the butte, the river,

cultural resources, heritage and social meaning, location, size and historic function, combine within Skinner Butte Park to play a complex role in the community.

#### ***Birthplace of the Community***

In a sense, Skinner Butte Park is the cradle of Eugene. Other cities may lay claim to a single house, a remnant farmstead, or simply a note in the history books about the origins of their contemporary community. Eugene is fortunate enough to have preserved, in perpetuity, a parcel of land over 100 acres in size that includes part of the very first Euro-American settlement in the area. As the city grew up around the park (see Chapter 2, Euro-American Settlement), a unique accretion of cultural remnants has evolved within the park that amounts to a living time table.

Unfortunately, much of this history is currently available to only a few knowledgeable community members. This indicates a certain unfulfilled potential for the park to serve a role as an anchor to the community's own past. Although the only accessible interpretation of history is currently experienced through the Skinner's cabin replica and the Applegate Trail Interpretive Center, there is a strong indication of an awareness of an underlying historical potential within the park. Public input clearly shows that this potential is highly valued within the park.

## **Natural Resource Education**

Many historic precedents point to the role of Skinner Butte Park as a passive recreation resource (see Chapter 2, “A Brief History of Skinner Butte Park”). Previous planning and policy for the park, as evidenced by the 1969 Metropolitan Civic Club survey and master planning effort, supports this idea and underscores the tremendous value of the park’s natural resources around the butte and the river. In recognition of this value, the theme of passive recreation has increased in popularity over the years as the community’s recreational preferences have begun to edge towards a more balanced, resource-based approach. Community input for the development of this master plan clearly shows a continuation of this trend.

Although Skinner Butte Park’s prominence and location demand a certain level of tolerance to human impact in natural areas, it is not adequately directed or minimized by the current condition of access routes and trails (see Chapter 3, “Current Condition”). It is important to recognize that the park’s natural resources have tremendous potential to play a central role in education of the community. Supporting this role in the park, however, while protecting the existing resources will require a thoughtful and creative approach.

## **Social Center**

The park has historically served first and foremost as a community focus for individuals, families and groups throughout the metropolitan area for social recreation, perspective, relaxation and enjoyment of the natural environment of the butte and river. As noted in the Hendricks Park Forest Management Plan, the National Recreation and Park Association puts forth recommendations for park classifications that expand upon those currently used by the City of Eugene. Specifically, a classification for natural resource areas, preserves and open space is deemed more appropriate for areas with high natural resource values. A metropolitan park is defined in broader terms as offering a “wide variety” of park and recreation functions serving the entire metropolitan area.

Skinner Butte Park, although it contains significant natural resources, is appropriately classified as a metropolitan park for its diversity of unique values, including social values and history, that would be too restricted by a purely natural resource classification. Furthermore, since Hendricks Park, a once popular destination for large groups and events, has officially adopted a policy of reduced visitor impact to protect its natural resources, the need for suitable sites for these activities is displaced to other areas in the park system, or to private developments offering a similar function.

Skinner Butte Park provides a number of areas, including the “park core” area around the existing playground, the Campbell Senior Center, the currently undeveloped west end, and the summit of Skinner Butte, that are highly suitable to large group social functions. The improvement of these areas to accommodate the expected increase in need and capacity will be important to both adequately and comfortably support this function, but also to focus the activity in those areas and away from more sensitive natural resources. It is important for the identity and social framework of the community that this role as a social center be preserved and actively supported within the park.

***It is important for the identity and social framework of the community to support Skinner Butte Park as a social center***

*The summit overlook area is an important focal point for the community*





*Visitors relax in the park core area. Survey respondents listed relaxation as the top reason for visiting Skinner Butte Park.*



### Use Patterns

Skinner Butte Park, through a diversity of activities that it has to offer, is used in equally diverse ways. The citywide survey helped catalog the types and popularity of certain general uses. The results suggest an approach for the future that builds on this diversity, with an emphasis on preservation and enhancement of those uses that are most popular and/or compatible with other unique, park-specific uses.

According to the citywide survey, people currently visit Skinner Butte Park mainly for relaxation, exercise (individual exercise such as biking, running, hiking, etc.), to enjoy nature, and for biking (primarily through the use of the bike path). Other popular uses include visiting the summit of Skinner Butte for views of the surrounding area, picnicking, using the playground, and social events. This reflects a continuation of passive recreation, social functions and low-level active recreation (such as individual sports and playgrounds) as the primary focus for the park, as supported by previous planning efforts and management policy.

**Passive recreation, social functions and individual active recreation are the primary focus for the park**

Some other, complementary uses include river recreation, experiencing history, rock climbing and the occasional use of the existing softball field. Although some hikers and dog-walkers use the lower river terrace and informal riverbank foot pathriver, access within the park is poor and naturally limits the extent to which river-related activities may currently be pursued. Likewise, the interpretation of the park's historic, cultural resources (see Chapter 3, "Cultural Resources") is currently limited. Both of these uses are complementary to the primary uses of the park, and are good candidates for greater support and expansion.

### Conflicting Uses

#### Negative Use:

The most conflicting uses present in the park include negative use patterns such as vandalism, illegal camping, littering, drug use and drinking. Many park facilities and natural areas are currently impacted by these activities. In particular, illegal camping and drug use has created unsafe and unsanitary conditions in certain areas around the butte and along the river. As a result of these activities, legitimate users are wary of entering these areas or avoid them altogether. Some legitimate users reportedly also avoid the Skinner Butte summit parking area during nighttime hours when loud music and underage drinking may be notably more frequent. Overall, studies show that the re-introduction and support of positive, legitimate use is the most effective remedy to the problem of negative use. Providing clean, attractive and safe facilities, programming, and a legitimate adult presence such as vending carts, along with actively discouraging negative use may offer an effective long-term solution.

#### Mountain Biking:

Mountain bikers and hikers are occasionally in conflict when using trails on the butte and along the river bank. Although both user groups impact natural areas and vegetation through trail cut-offs, erosion and compaction, the small size and



fragility of the park's habitats are less likely to sustain long-term use by mountain biking than other areas in the park system, such as the Ridgeline Trail. Because of this, and in recognition of the potential for high pedestrian use from downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods, mountain biking may be an inappropriate use for the park. Streets and bike paths provide adequate bike access to the park, and the short lengths of trails within the park are not likely to create a significant draw for legitimate mountain biking interest.

### Organized Sports:

The citywide survey indicates organized sports as the least popular use for the park, as well as the lowest priority for additions to park facilities (2% to 7% support). Other public input also clearly indicates that organized sports are a low priority. The most frequent explanation for this opinion is that organized sports facilities such as soccer fields and softball fields are seen as a use suitable to any relatively level, open site, and do not reflect or support the unique qualities of Skinner Butte Park. Opinions suggest, however, that the existing ball field (see Chapter 3), as a historic, sub-standard facility, provides an opportunity for informal play associated with social events taking place near the main picnic area. The ball field is currently not programmed or reserved (due to its small size), and should remain open for informal play only. Support exists for smaller court-type sports facilities under the condition that they are strictly ancillary to social event functions, and do not conflict with unique park values.

### Changing Society, Changing Use Patterns

Often despite the condition of the facilities, the park is popular and enjoys a great deal of use on summer evenings and weekends. In the morning and in the evening, bicycle commuters and runners use the bike path. At lunchtime, more noon-hour users are attracted to the park for exercise, or to enjoy lunch or take a nap in their car. As in many city parks, however, there appears to be relatively little activity during other daytime hours.



*Mountain bikers, hikers and dog-walkers use the existing, unimproved river bank foot path*

Changing cultural values, including productivity, demands of education, gender roles, work schedules and modes of popular entertainment all probably contribute to this trend in one way or another. The reactivation of the park through programming that is responsive to these contemporary trends is seen as key to shifting back towards more positive use patterns. In addition, offering opportunities, facilities and management in city parks that respond to contemporary leisure preferences such as nature, education, personal sporting activities and events may help attract more park users back from other forms of local entertainment and more distant outdoor recreation destinations.

Focusing on enhancing features attractive to the public, while restoring and protecting natural resources may be the key to long-term transformation towards positive use patterns. With its large size and geographic diversity, Skinner Butte Park offers tremendous potential in this area.

**Skinner Butte Park has the potential to offer many features that are attractive to today's park users**

## Management

### Staffing and Funding

Skinner Butte Park is maintained on a regular schedule, and on an as-needed basis by general parks maintenance staff. There are no staff currently dedicated specifically to the maintenance of the park. Mowing, weeding, pruning, trash removal and facilities repair occur regularly, while

***There are no permanent or renewable funding sources committed to maintenance of Skinner Butte Park***

renovation of planting beds, such as work done recently near the Facility Management buildings and main picnic area, generally occurs as maintenance staff and funding are available. Over the past few years, volunteer efforts through organizations such as the Eugene Rotary Club, have helped stretch currently limited staff and funding to help maintain and improve the quality of park facilities. With no dedicated staff for the park, organizational responsibilities have generally been shared for these projects.

By financial necessity, the large natural areas within the park are not maintained by regular staff. Removal of invasive species has increased in recent years, such as ivy removal in the north side forest, as well as blackberry and Scotch broom removal, and thinning of vegetation in other areas. This work has typically occurred through staff-managed volunteer efforts or contracted labor with youth organizations or county corrections crews. Ongoing experimentation has been exploring the most effective methods for invasive species removal in conjunction with local naturalists and students from the University of Oregon.

Recent efforts have increased around removal of debris from illegal camps and drug use. Funding was recently allocated for a river-bank clean-up effort that has

helped spur activity in this area. In the winter and spring of 2001, a large area of invasive plant species was removed through a separate project from the south Skinner Butte area, west of the SMJ House and north of the Lincoln Yard. Dozens of illegal camps, including tons of litter and waste and hundreds of hypodermic needles, were also removed. SMJ house staff report that legitimate use has increased significantly in this area since the project was completed.

There are no permanent or renewable funding sources committed to the maintenance of Skinner Butte Park. In the face of imminent budget cuts and increasing demand on maintenance staff, this has been a significant challenge. Given the importance of this resource, the need for long-term funding is urgent.

### ***Events and Activities***

Several major annual events occur in Skinner Butte Park, including the Butte-to-Butte run in early summer, bicycle races and a breakfast social during the Eugene Celebration. These events are allowed by permit, and contribute greatly to positive use patterns. For its location and generally good access and parking, Skinner Butte Park is an ideal location for community-wide events. These and other types of events should be encouraged and supported through facility improvement and policy.

Several facilities in and around Skinner Butte Park are available for renting. Lamb Cottage, the Campbell Senior Center and the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House are all rented and frequently booked for private events. Records show that other park facilities around the city are also rented to capacity, particularly during the warm season, and indicate a need for more of this type of facility. Large and small outdoor rental shelters are among the most popular facilities for private events. If public facilities fail to accommodate this need, there may be a greater likelihood that the private sector will move to fill the demand, possibly forfeiting the benefits of community-building and positive use patterns in city parks.

***The need for long-term funding is urgent***



*Urban Forestry staff on call in Skinner Butte Park*

# Current Policy and Trends



## Statewide Planning Goals

Statewide Goal 5 supports the conservation of open space and the protection of natural and scenic resources. This goal also

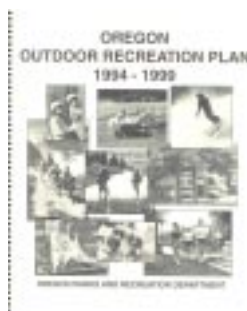
highlights the importance of managing existing resources, including cultural areas, historic areas, natural areas, open space, scenic areas and wilderness so as to preserve their original character.

Statewide Planning Goal 8 mandates and sets forth criteria for assessing, planning and developing recreational facilities. Guidelines are also provided for implementation of recreation plans, including funding sources, review criteria and basic priorities. The 1989 Eugene Parks and Recreation Plan was created through the recommendations of Goal 8.

Statewide Planning Goal 15 mandates the Willamette River Greenway, including preservation and public acquisition of land along the Willamette River for public access, recreation, scenic quality and wildlife habitat. Skinner Butte Park is within the defined boundary of the Greenway, and is subject to the special permitting requirements established by Goal 15. Triggers requiring a Greenway permit application include any development, change of use or intensification of use on properties within the Greenway. The permit process requires extensive documentation of project parameters, public review and a public hearing.

## Relevant Goals and Policies of the 1989 Eugene Parks and Recreation Plan

- ▶ Strengthen the role of recreational and cultural services in order to improve the community's marketability and economic base.
- ▶ Maintain, remodel and upgrade park, recreational and cultural facilities in order to respond to changing uses as well as attain and preserve operational efficiency.
- ▶ Prepare general plans for major park land and facilities prior to development or renovation in order to promote project coordination and to conserve and protect natural open spaces where appropriate.
- ▶ Provide natural areas, cultural amenities, and unique open spaces for educational and passive leisure use.
- ▶ Protect unique geographical features, buttes, and other natural landmarks in parks and other recreational facilities for their contribution to the community's identity.
- ▶ In coordination with the Historic Review Board, identify and acknowledge historic sites, buildings, structures and objects and preserve their integrity in park and recreational facilities.
- ▶ Treat environmental enhancement as a component of recreational development.
- ▶ Protect views from natural promontories that are not yet developed if they are in public ownership.
- ▶ Promote the development of bicycle and pedestrian routes between all neighborhoods and major recreational and cultural resources such as the Willamette River, the south hills and the downtown area.
- ▶ Encourage bus and bicycle use for traveling to parks by providing shelters, drop-off areas, and bicycle paths.
- ▶ Provide safe parking at parks and recreational facilities that commonly draw crowds arriving by both automobile and bicycles.
- ▶ Provide safe and convenient access to parks and recreational facilities for persons with disabilities.



## Statewide Recreation Planning

The 1994-1999 Oregon Outdoor Recreation Plan, prepared by the Oregon Department of Parks and

Recreation, included an extensive survey of recreation preferences and participation throughout Oregon. The results reveal significant trends towards passive recreational activities such as walking, running, picnicking, trail use and nature observation. This study closely reflects local trends revealed through the citywide survey for preferred uses of Skinner Butte

**A statewide survey revealed trends towards passive recreation activities**

**Planning goals to bring more high density residential development downtown highlight the importance of Skinner Butte Park as an open space resource**

Park. The study also reflected a desire for more activities in these areas, also including cultural events and botanical and historical displays.

The survey also explored barriers to participation in local recreation activities. Over 60% of respondents cited having “no time” to participate in their favorite activities, followed by the response that conditions are “too crowded”, or “too far” to participate. These trends generally support the need for development of passive recreational facilities on a level that can adequately serve the local population without overcrowding or excessive competition for the resource, as well as creative and attractive programming adapted to modern lifestyles and able to compete with increasing time demands.



### **Eugene Parks and Recreation Plan**

The 1989 Eugene Parks and Recreation Plan highlights several recommendations affecting Skinner Butte Park (see

box inset on facing page). Skinner Butte Park is the most significant park resource in the Central Planning District, which is characterized by the highest housing density (and lowest household size), the

lowest home ownership rate, and the highest percentage of total development (95%) of all 11 districts within the city. This underscores the park's importance as a social center and open space resource for the downtown area.

High-priority actions in the 1989 plan include the construction of sand volleyball courts, the completion of land acquisition north of Cheshire Avenue, and the extension of Cheshire Avenue through the existing I-105 underpass to connect with Jefferson Street and the Owen Rose Garden. This recommendation still makes sense in terms of a functional connection between Skinner Butte Park and Owen Rose Garden, but has met with resistance during neighborhood planning efforts. Public response towards volleyball courts has been generally ambivalent.

Medium priority actions include working with the Historic Review Board to evaluate various ways to preserve historic sites in the Skinner Butte area and to increase public awareness of their role in Eugene's early development. This recommendation is clearly reflected in current public sentiment.

### **Metropolitan Natural Resources Study**

State Planning Goal 5 mandates the inventory of natural resources by local jurisdictions. A joint team including the City of Eugene, the City of Springfield and Lane County is currently in the process of completing a study for the Eugene/Springfield metro area. Although specific recommendations are not due to be published until 2003, preliminary maps identify Skinner Butte as significant upland habitat, and the banks of the Willamette River through Skinner Butte Park as a significant riparian corridor. These areas are likely to be identified for preservation and restoration of existing habitat values.

### **Downtown Visioning**

As highlighted through an extensive public involvement and visioning process in 2000/2001, urban planning goals for Eugene include bringing more residents and higher

*The Downtown Visioning process and North End Scoping Group identified opportunities to connect downtown to Skinner Butte Park near the historic train station, shown here c. 1912*





development densities into the downtown area. As part of an overall program to reduce urban sprawl, transportation demands and the decentralization of the community, this is important for the long-term health and vitality of the city's urban core. Other policy and infrastructure improvement measures are being taken to effect these changes.

As the largest urban park directly adjacent to the downtown core of Eugene, Skinner Butte Park will be a key resource for revitalization of this area. Urban residents will need readily accessible open spaces as a counter-balance to urban living. Development and maintenance of recreational and natural resources to serve this increasing urban population, as well as convenient pedestrian and bicycle access from the downtown area, will be important for the success of these planning goals. Specific visions for the downtown area include a pedestrian extension of Willamette Street near the train station to the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House and the summit of Skinner Butte.



### **North End Scoping Group**

In 1999, a city staff-facilitated committee initiated by the mayor and Eugene City Council met to discuss the future

of the north end of downtown Eugene, including 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between High and Charnelton, and the train station area. The plan highlights several recommendations affecting future planning and policy for Skinner Butte Park (see inset box to right).

### **Relevant Recommendations from the North End Scoping Group**

- ▶ Creating a pedestrian connection to the Shelton-McMurphy-Johnson House and up the south side of Skinner Butte
- ▶ Promoting pedestrian use and implementing traffic calming measures
- ▶ Keeping and restoring the train station, and promoting it as a civic destination
- ▶ Providing safe pedestrian access to the train station from areas north of the tracks
- ▶ Creating new public spaces
- ▶ Promoting street vendors and other activation of public space
- ▶ Promoting increased density, mixed use and residential development of the north end area
- ▶ Developing design standards to reflect the unique historic character of the area
- ▶ Providing shuttle bus services, on-street parking and parking structures
- ▶ Providing more bicycle parking



### **Whiteaker Neighborhood Refinement Plan**

The Whiteaker neighborhood refinement plan, developed in 1994, proposes several recommendations relevant to Skinner

Butte Park. These recommendations are listed in the table on the facing page.



### **Planning for Skinner Butte Park**

Very little planning has taken place specifically to guide the development of Skinner Butte Park. The most recent effort involved the Metropolitan Civic

Club, formed in 1969 to look at Skinner Butte and generate ideas for possible uses (see Chapter 2). Many separate planning efforts have also been undertaken for other areas of Skinner Butte Park, including development of picnic areas, the summit

***There has never been a comprehensive planning effort for Skinner Butte Park***

### Relevant Recommendations from the Whiteaker Neighborhood Refinement Plan

- ▶ Expand Skinner Butte Park in order to facilitate use and enjoyment of the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House and to protect the lower slopes from further erosion by retaining significant vegetation
- ▶ Continue to pursue acquisition of the vacant wooded portion of the Ya-Po-Ah Terrace property, south of the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House for public open space and retention of as much of the wooded area as possible
- ▶ Examine City acquisition of the vacant parcels on the northeastern edge of Skinner Butte Park for public open space and retention of the urban forest
- ▶ Recognize the Skinner Butte Mixed Use Area as appropriate for a mixture of land uses including light-medium industrial, commercial and residential
- ▶ Continue to encourage the development of community garden space on suitable publicly owned land in the Whiteaker community
- ▶ In evaluating future new park-related uses or activities at the City maintenance yard at 255 Lincoln Street, consideration should be given to the impacts proposed uses may have on Skinner Butte, particularly with regard to the southwesterly view of the City from the road immediately above the property. Consider replacing the existing parking lot for basalt column users to a new site on the northern portion of the maintenance site.
- ▶ Improve landscape in the open space portion of the park area north of Cheshire Street and east of the I-105 bridge
- ▶ Prior to establishing a budget for the project or expending any additional City capital funds, conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the impacts associated with the potential extension of Cheshire Street from Washington Street to Jefferson Street under the I-105 bridge
- ▶ Identify portions of the Willamette Riverbank to preserve in as natural a state as possible. This would include encouraging the use of native plant species that help to support wildlife and NOT planting green lawns
- ▶ Strengthen policy aimed at protecting natural vegetation and wildlife habitats [in parks] by including support for diversity of wildlife species and populations. Shift planting of public parks away from heavily managed ground to natural self-propagating plants to obtain low-maintenance costs while considering safety.

*Skinner Butte Park has long been surrounded by a mix of industrial, commercial and residential uses (as shown in this 1934 photograph). The Whiteaker Neighborhood Refinement plan suggests continuing this mix of uses in the Skinner Butte area.*



overlook area, parking areas, riverbank stabilization, street improvements, building renovations, etc. None of these efforts appear to have been guided by a publicly adopted master plan. Several student projects through the University of Oregon Landscape Architecture program represent the first attempts to address the park holistically. These plans, however, were developed with minimal public involvement and were also never officially recognized or adopted.

### Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House Historic Landscape Master Plan

This recent body of grant-funded research outlines suggestions for the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House and surrounding areas. Although this is not an officially adopted plan, some aspects are currently under consideration.

### Summary

Although no publicly-adopted master plan has previously existed for Skinner Butte Park, current planning policy clearly points to the importance of this resource for passive recreation, preservation of cultural resources, as well as the livability and economic success of downtown Eugene. Overall, related planning efforts also support the theme of respecting the unique aspects of the park, and combining them sensitively for a diversity of recreational experiences, education, and intrinsic natural and cultural resource values.



# CHAPTER 5: SKINNER BUTTE PARK MASTER PLAN

## Park Policy Framework

### *Introduction*

This chapter begins by recapturing the policy information provided in Chapter 1. The purpose is to outline the policy framework developed during the public involvement and research process as a reference point for further policy refinements as follows:

- ▶ **Management Units**
- ▶ **Habitat Management Plan**
- ▶ **Viewshed Management Plan**

At the end of this chapter, the most practical and important piece of the master plan is presented: the **Implementation Plan**.

### *Vision Statement*

The Skinner Butte Park vision statement responds to the issues and desires generated at the first public workshop. It is a long-term picture of how the park should look and function. A draft vision statement was presented at the second workshop and amended to become more inclusive and respond to a desire for emphasis in certain areas. It is meant to be the overall guide under which all aspects of the master plan are organized. In other words, the goals, strategies and actions listed hereafter are all tools to realize this vision

### *Vision Statement*

As the birthplace of Eugene, and as a unique landmark of geography, history and ecology, Skinner Butte Park plays a vital role at the heart of our community. The care and stewardship of this public resource shall be a top priority, with a focus on creating a “crown jewel” of Eugene’s parks. Skinner Butte Park will foster civic pride and a citywide sense of community, and will provide a diverse blend of recreational and educational opportunities for everyone. This shall be accomplished by emphasizing and interpreting its rich cultural history and unique geography, including the butte and the Willamette River; by building a stronger connection to downtown; by revitalizing its core park facilities and, above all; by protecting and enhancing its valuable native habitats for the enjoyment of future generations.



## Issues

The vision statement responds to a set of current issues surrounding the park. The following list highlights the most commonly mentioned and critical of these issues as they were explored during the first public workshop session. The list has been updated and revised as research and broader public input helped direct the process. The planning process was aimed at addressing these specific issues, which helped set the tone for discussions and research leading to the set of recommendations contained in this plan. This list expands on the issues presented in Chapter 1.

### **Issue #1: The mission and role of the park is unclear.**

### **Issue #2: The park's rich natural and cultural history has tremendous potential but is poorly represented and interpreted.**

- » The park is the physical origin of the city and local community.
- » Local native cultures had a presence in the park for thousands of years that is not currently represented.
- » Many historical features that exist in the park remain anonymous.
- » Some historic features in the park are deteriorating.
- » No clear policy exists regarding the role of the SMJ house in the park.
- » Historic views from the butte are largely gone and disappearing quickly.

### **Issue #3: Active management of natural areas is needed.**

- » Natural resources have a high community value.
- » Most natural areas in the park are dominated by invasive vegetation.
- » Some valuable native habitat is in danger of being lost.
- » Rare plants exist in the park.
- » No comprehensive natural resources study exists for the park.
- » Some conflicts exist between maintenance practices and natural systems.
- » No staff resources are available for maintenance of natural areas.

### **Issue #4: Park amenities are insufficient and outdated.**

- » The park has a strong civic focus, but lacks certain key support facilities.
- » Many support facilities were developed between 25 and 50 years ago, and no longer retain the quality and function to support the needs of a growing population.
- » The west end of the park remains undeveloped and under-utilized.
- » Physical intrusions such as the radio tower impact recreation and aesthetic values.

### **Issue #5: The butte embodies multiple unique values.**

- » The butte is a geographic landmark of historic significance, whose historic appearance and view sheds are threatened by forestation in the absence of pre-historic management.
- » The butte contains remnant natural areas of noteworthy integrity, especially valuable for their proximity to downtown, that are threatened by forestation and invasive vegetation.
- » The butte is a significant feature for native resident and migratory birds.
- » The butte represents a civic focus, attraction and icon for a community identity, but is in poor repair and lends a somewhat run-down image.

**The Master Plan responds to a set of current issues in the park**

*The University of Oregon observatory, seen here in this 1890 photograph, is one example of a rich history in Skinner Butte Park that needs to be made available to the community through more interpretation*



*An informal footpath follows the banks of the Willamette River in Skinner Butte Park. Recognizing and celebrating the river is seen as important to the future of the park*



**Issue #6: The Willamette River is a key component of the park.**

- » The river is a unique and dominating feature that connects the park regionally.
- » The river corridor provides valuable habitat.
- » A large section of the river bank is in danger of collapse or major erosion.
- » Current bank stabilization methods are not environmentally sensitive.
- » There is potential for using natural river bank restoration techniques.
- » Some activities, such as illegal camping and mountain biking, may adversely affect the quality of the riparian area for both habitat and recreation.

**Issue #7: A connection from the butte to downtown is of key importance, but does not currently exist.**

- » There is no direct access from downtown to the butte due to the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> connector, a private parking lot and the railroad tracks.
- » A historic plan for a pedestrian corridor from Willamette Street to the butte was never realized, but remains key to the function of the park.
- » Illegal camping and poorly defined paths dominate the pedestrian experience on the south butte from the summit to downtown.

**Multiple interests require a sound decision-making framework**

**Issue #8: Access and circulation are adequate, but could be improved.**

- » Entrances to the park are generally not well defined.
- » Bike and pedestrian access from downtown and adjacent neighborhoods is poor.
- » The hiking trail system has potential but is poorly defined and feels unsafe.
- » Undefined trails in the natural areas on the river and butte are causing damage.
- » The existing I-105 underpass is closed and unused.
- » I-105 has several adverse impacts on the park and adjacent neighborhood.

**Policy Goals**

The following goals are adapted from research, interviews and responses at public workshops for the Skinner Butte Master plan. These goals set the stage for specific ways of achieving the vision presented in the vision statement. They can also be called “policy goals” in that they affect park improvement, maintenance and programming policies, as well as how future ideas for what to do with the park will be evaluated.

1. **Preserve, enhance and recognize Skinner Butte Park’s rich natural and cultural history as a predominant theme, and promote this through diverse interpretive and educational opportunities.**
2. **Protect, repair and restore the health and viability of diverse habitat types in Skinner Butte Park by creatively managing valuable natural resources and successional processes.**
3. **Improve and maintain Skinner Butte Park as a key, high-quality civic destination for private, public, community and neighborhood social events, activities and individual recreation.**

4. **Recognize the Willamette River and the river corridor as a key component of Skinner Butte Park, and protect, repair and restore this resource while integrating a balance of recreational access and use.**
5. **Emphasize and encourage bicycle and pedestrian transportation while providing for clear, convenient and adequate disabled access and vehicular use within Skinner Butte Park .**
6. **Recognize and strengthen Skinner Butte Park's connection with downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.**

### Strategies

Specific strategies and actions are recommended to execute the master planning goals for Skinner Butte Park. These are essentially the nuts and bolts of the master plan, and begin to chart the way, step by step, toward realizing the overall vision for the park. The outline of these strategies is provided in Chapter 1.

Strategies provide categories for specific ideas (actions) about making changes in the park. In this chapter, the strategies are integrated directly into the **Implementation Plan** spreadsheet at the end of the chapter.

## Management Units

### Introduction

In this section, the general approach to management of Skinner Butte Park will be discussed to provide a framework for the Implementation Plan. This will help guide permitted uses, maintenance operations, volunteer projects and other efforts not specifically covered in the Implementation Plan. See Map 7 for a graphic key to the management units described in this chapter.

### Intent and Application

The Implementation Plan recommends the creation of management units within the park to identify specific areas and highlight preferred uses, management guidelines and development patterns appropriate to each area. Management Units for Skinner Butte Park will include a diversity of management types, including recreational units and habitat units, that indicate the focus of the area.

### Criteria

The Skinner Butte Park management units were created to balance a diversity of uses throughout the park, and emphasize uses and management types that are most suitable to each area. Preferred uses and management recommendations shall reflect the intent of the Master Plan vision and policy goals in various areas of the park. Each unit shall be described by a general boundary as shown on Map 7.

### Modification of Units

Unit boundaries are general in nature and may be modified based on the findings of future research efforts such as the habitat inventory, oversights in the planning process, and/or evolving use patterns of the park.

**Management Units help define uses and development patterns for diverse areas within the park**

*The Campbell Senior Center is one example of many different types of facilities and land uses present in Skinner Butte Park. Defining appropriate uses through management units is a key goal of the Master Plan.*







The undeveloped west end of Skinner Butte Park, shown here, will benefit from a clear definition of preferred use types

**Management Units are divided into three separate categories:**

**Habitat Units  
Recreation Units  
Special Units**

### Unit Categories

Each Management Unit fits into one of several general categories. Overall preferred uses and facility types are listed below for each of these categories. Note that these general preferences may be refined by each individual Management Unit description.

#### H - Habitat Unit

*Focus: Habitat Units focus on the preservation, restoration and maintenance of diverse habitat types in the park.*

*Preferred Uses: Preferred uses for these areas include restoration and maintenance activities by City staff, contractors and/or volunteer efforts as outlined in the **Habitat Management Plan, the Viewshed Management Plan** and the **Implementation Plan**. Other preferred uses include passive recreation and access to habitat units for hiking, birding, observing nature, classes, education and similar activities. Large group events or activities, uses that create excessive noise or damage to native vegetation, and programmed uses (besides educational, restoration or maintenance activities) are strongly discouraged for these areas.*

*Facilities: Facilities appropriate for these areas include soft surface trails such as gravel or wood chips, dirt trails, wayfinding signage, interpretive kiosks or signs for ecology or history, limited benches of natural materials, railings, and small bridges or*

*boardwalks where necessary. Facilities not in keeping with habitat management values are also discouraged, except as specifically noted for each zone. Care should be taken to avoid rare plant populations, significant bird nesting sites and other key ecological considerations.*

*Vegetation Management: Appropriate vegetation types shall be described for each zone. See Chapter 3 for descriptions of existing vegetation in specific areas.*

#### R - Recreation Unit

*Focus: Recreation Units focus on recreational uses generally appropriate for Skinner Butte Park.*

*Preferred Uses: Preferred uses include individual, informal recreation such as walking, running, biking, kite flying, Frisbee, children's play, picnicking, family events, large community events, exhibitions, and celebrations, programmed events and activities, private events, informal and programmed use of existing facilities as described specifically by each unity, education, classes, tours, etc. Uses not appropriate for these areas include programmed, organized field sports such as soccer and softball.*

*Facilities: Facilities appropriate to these areas shall be ADA accessible and include hard-surface paths, pedestrian-scale lights, benches, picnic tables, shelters, play equipment, art installations, interpretive features, bike facilities, parking and utility access, water and power sources, etc. as specifically described for each unit, or as noted the Implementation Plan.*

*Vegetation Management: Appropriate vegetation types shall be described for each zone.*

#### S - Special Unit

*Special Units are unique in purpose and/or character, and are described individually in terms of use and management, as well as their special relationship to the park.*



# Management Unit Descriptions

## Habitat Units (H1 - H10)

### H1: North Skinner Butte Forest

Native forest ecosystem management is the top priority for this area. Management should support succession towards a healthy, old growth forest characterized by a multi-story stand of bigleaf maple, Douglas fir, grand fir, and other mixed conifer and hardwood species native to the Willamette Valley. Middle and understory vegetation shall also be managed for a maximum diversity of native species. The generally-applicable resource management objectives and strategies outlined in the HPFMP for the Douglas Fir Management Unit (FMU) are appropriate for this unit.

Special appropriate uses include the designation of a significant pedestrian route from the summit of the butte, approximately following the route of existing trails, to the historic picnic area at the northern foot of the butte. This pedestrian route will include the use of natural materials such as stone masonry, stairways, benches, and some areas of railings to control short cutting and erosion.

### H2: South Skinner Butte Mixed Transitional Forest

Native forest ecosystem management is the top priority for this area. Removal of invasive species and directing forest succession towards a healthy native system of higher diversity and greater habitat function is a key management goal. Diverse forest types should be allowed to develop naturally within the unit.

Multiple master plan management goals affect this area, and need to be accommodated. In particular, the Critical Viewshed Overlay Zones predominantly affects this area, and shall be applied according to the Viewshed Management



*The North Skinner Butte Forest (H1) unit is characterized by several layers of native plants, as well as rapidly spreading areas of invasive English ivy.*

Plan. This area is also covered by the Bird Migration Overlay Zone that encourages the long-term maintenance of a significant, native tree canopy.

Special appropriate uses include the designation of a significant pedestrian route from the southern foot of the butte near the Shelton McMurphey Johnson House, approximately following the route of existing trails, to the summit of the butte. This pedestrian route will include the use of natural materials such as stone masonry, stairways, benches, and some areas of railings to control short-cutting and erosion. Low-level pedestrian lighting will be allowed along this route.

### H3: Oak Savanna Transition Area

Native oak savanna ecosystem management is the top priority for this area. The band of oak and dense undergrowth that defines the northern edge of existing upland prairie and managed meadow areas should be preserved near its current condition. This band generally reaches from the western edge of the butte to the eastern edge, and provides a key transition area from the more open habitats to the

**Special uses that are considered appropriate for each habitat unit are listed in the unit descriptions**

**Some Habitat Units  
recommend  
restoring historic  
habitat types**

south into the forested condition on the north side of the butte. Invasive species may be removed in these areas, as well as native species such as Douglas fir, bigleaf maple and incense cedar that would compete with the oak woodland. Understory native vegetation, such as serviceberry, ocean spray, indian plum, snowberry and native herbaceous plants should be left intact. The transition area may, however, be extended into the prairie areas with native shrubs, etc. Oregon white oak should be added or encouraged to preserve future succession of this habitat type. Uses for this area are consistent with the general Habitat Management Unit description.

#### **H4: Upland Prairie**

Native upland prairie ecosystem management is the top priority for this area. Existing areas of relatively intact native upland prairie shall be enhanced and expanded. Some conversion of portions of the South Skinner Butte Mixed Forest (see Chapter 4) towards a native upland prairie ecosystem will occur in this area. In prairie restoration areas, non-native trees as well as most native conifers and maples may be removed to create appropriate growing conditions for upland prairie plant communities. See the **Habitat Management Plan** for restoration criteria, including the tree removal authorization. Some native oaks, madrone and maple will

be left in transition areas of this unit. Selected smaller, native trees may also be planted in these areas to add to the overall plant diversity and habitat value. Other trees may remain for screening or other aesthetic purposes. Uses for this area are consistent with the general Habitat Management Unit description.

#### **H5: Wet Prairie**

Native wet prairie ecosystem management is a high priority for this area. Irrigated, non-native lawn areas will be converted toward a functional wet prairie ecosystem. Irrigation will be discontinued, and a mowing schedule appropriate for wet prairie management will be commenced. Scattered native trees appropriate to wet prairie growing conditions may be added to this area. Non-native plants along the existing embankment below (north of) Cheshire Avenue and in the east end (picnic area/parking lot embankments) may be removed and replaced with lower-growing native species. Visibility from Cheshire Avenue and parking areas into the park is a priority.

Special appropriate uses include individual, group or community uses ancillary to use or rental of Lamb Cottage. Picnicking, barbecues, etc. may occur in this area as conditions such as soil moisture permit. Maintenance schedules and priorities for wet prairie areas, however, need not be altered to accommodate these uses. A 20-foot wide strip of mowed, irrigated lawn shall be retained along the bike path through this unit. All current and future uses and facilities related to the bike path shall be allowed for the bike path and lawn strip area, including lighting, bike parking, benches, signs, etc. Picnicking and uses related to the existing picnic area at the east end of this unit are also appropriate.

Redevelopment of hard surface paths for pedestrian and bicycle traffic will also occur in this area. These paths shall be consistent with the intent conveyed by the Skinner Butte Park Draft Master Plan illustration (see Map 1).

**Figure 3: H5 Skinner Butte Summit Mowed Area**



#### **H6: Upland Prairie / Wet Prairie**

A blend of native upland and wet prairie ecosystem management shall be the top priority for this area. See units H4 and H6, respectively, for upland prairie and wet prairie habitat management guidelines. Significant conversion of non-native, irrigated lawn areas towards upland and wet prairie ecosystems will occur in this area. Irrigation will be discontinued, and a mowing schedule appropriate for native prairie management will be commenced.

Special appropriate uses for this area includes cultivation, maintenance and harvest of camas and tar weed crops in a manner consistent with, or generally representative of, techniques applied by Native Americans in the Willamette Valley. Community events celebrating this and other interpretive values of native upland and wet prairie are also appropriate for this area. This is also seen as an opportunity area for demonstration of extinct management techniques such as seasonal burning.

Development of hard surface paths for pedestrian and bicycle traffic shall be allowed in this area. These paths shall be consistent with the intent conveyed by the Skinner Butte Park Draft Master Plan illustration (see Map 1).

#### **H7: Wet Prairie and Stormwater Demonstration Area**

Native wet prairie and wetland ecosystem management shall be a high priority for this area. See Unit H6 for native wet prairie habitat management guidelines. Irrigated, non-native lawn areas will be converted towards a functional wet prairie and wetland ecosystem. Irrigation will be discontinued, and a mowing schedule appropriate for wet prairie management will be commenced. Demonstration stormwater treatment is a high priority use for existing low areas in this unit. These areas are generally reflected in the Skinner Butte Park Draft Master Plan illustration (see Map 1). Treatment of stormwater from Cheshire Avenue and other street, building or parking facilities developed in conjunction with the historic community

farm may be diverted for retention or detention in this area. Stormwater BMP's (Best Management Practices) should guide this demonstration project, and be incorporated with interpretive features, bicycle and pedestrian paths or boardwalks, etc.

#### **H8: Willamette Riverbank**

Native riparian and riverbank ecosystem management shall be the top priority for this area. Management should support a dynamic, native riparian ecosystem characterized by multiple stages of succession for appropriate native plant communities. As in other areas, invasive species removal and progression towards greater diversity and higher habitat value is a key management goal.

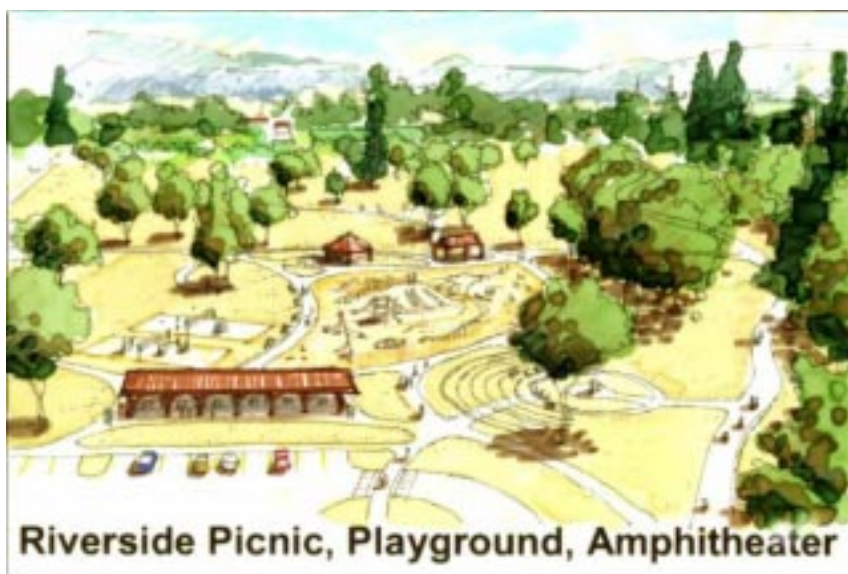
Special appropriate uses include up to three locations of pedestrian river access, including one location of boat access currently used by emergency vehicles. Automotive access, other than emergency vehicles, shall not be allowed. Access to the proposed River Bottom Trail (see **Implementation Plan**) shall be restricted to pedestrian use. Trail access points, re-grading and improvements, including the addition of several trail connectors linking the River Bottom Trail to the bike path, is also appropriate for this area for visitor access, interpretation and management of visitor impact.

**Many Habitat Units allow for hard or soft surface path and trails for public access**

*Some areas of wet, little used and difficult-to-maintain lawn areas will be converted to native wet prairie*







*Unit R1: The Park Core is the active heart of Skinner Butte Park. Management supporting individual, family and community recreation, social activities and events is the top priority for this area.*

### **H9: Willamette Riverbank Erosion Control Area**

Stabilizing the riverbank through “bioengineered” solutions is the top priority for this area (see Map 8). This Management Unit represents an approximate area of riverbank that may be converted to constructed riverbank terraces, including existing lawn areas and several mature trees. Management of this area following bioengineered stabilization and reconstruction of the river bank should support a dynamic, native riparian ecosystem characterized by multiple stages of succession for appropriate native plant communities. As in other areas, invasive species removal and progression towards greater diversity and higher habitat value is a key management goal. Interim management priorities include those listed for Unit H7.

Special appropriate uses for this area include uses related to the bike path as described for Unit H6. Stabilization of the riverbank through rip-rap or other structural means with low ecological value is a low priority, but may be allowed in this unit on an emergency basis.

**A large portion of the river bank will be reconstructed for habitat value and erosion control**

## **Recreation Units (R1 - R5)**

### **R1: Park Core**

Management supporting a City-wide center for individual, family, group and community recreation and events is the top priority for this area. This area will be characterized by a diversity of uses and recreational opportunities, bicycle, car and bus parking for staging and access to the River Bottom Trail, the Skinner Butte trail system, the bike path, Lamb Cottage, etc. Facilities shall include a large, redeveloped children’s play area, one new, large picnic structure, one new, small picnic structure, a new amphitheater and stage area, informal turf volley ball courts, redeveloped pathways, new lighting and park furniture, existing interpretive features associated with the Skinner’s cabin replica, new interpretive features, a redeveloped existing parking lot and other elements as described in the Implementation Plan. Preferred landscape types include irrigated, traditionally maintained lawn, shrub and perennial beds for showy floral display, scent, shade and aesthetic appeal. Native plants should be incorporated in place of non-native varieties where their function is similar and appropriate.

### **R2: Historic Picnic Area**

Management supporting a City-wide center for individual, family and group picnicking is the top priority for this area. Management of the stone walls as a historic resource is also a focus for this unit. As an important transition zone from the North Skinner Butte Forest habitat zone to the concentrated human activity of the Park Core, preferred landscape types include irrigated, traditionally maintained lawn bordered by the semi-formal use of site-appropriate native plants for floral display, scent and aesthetic appeal.

### **R3: Overlook Area**

Management supporting a high-quality community focal point is the top priority for this area. This unit is characterized by uses and recreational opportunities centered around social gathering, community events and exhibitions, enjoyment of views, picnicking, interpretive signage, and bicycle, car and bus parking for staging and



access to natural areas and the butte trail system. Preferred landscape types include irrigated, traditionally maintained lawn (if included in detailed renovation plan of area) bordered by the semi-formal or formal use of site-appropriate native plants for floral display, scent and aesthetic appeal.

#### **R4: Skinner Butte Summit Upland Prairie and Recreation Area**

This unit shall include public use of the butte summit, where a mowed area shall be maintained throughout the growing season to provide picnic and informal recreation space for uses including large groups and community events. The size of the mowed area shall be approximately as shown in Figure 3, and may be variable as approved by the Parks Planning Manager. Native upland prairie ecosystem management is a shared priority for this area. See Unit H4 for habitat restoration and management guidelines.

#### **R5: East Skinner Butte Park**

Management supporting community recreation, social gathering and events is the top priority for this area. This unit is characterized by uses and recreational opportunities related to the enjoyment of the Willamette River, the bike path, events and programming through the Campbell Senior Center, bicycle, car and bus parking for staging and access to the River Bottom Trail, the Skinner Butte trail system, the bike path, and the Campbell Senior Center. Preferred landscape types include irrigated, traditionally maintained lawn, shrub and perennial beds for showy floral display, scent, shade and aesthetic appeal. Native plants should be incorporated in place of non-native varieties where their function is similar and appropriate.

#### **R6: The Columns**

Management supporting the use of this area for publicly accessible, recreational rock climbing is the top priority for this area, including maintaining the structural integrity of the rock feature. Safety is a very high priority, and improvements or measures related to maintaining or improving safety are appropriate for this and all immediately surrounding areas. This unit is characterized by recreational rock climbing and supporting needs, such as bicycle and car parking, benches, seating areas, improved access to the top of the columns, informational and interpretive signage, and as described in the **Implementation Plan**. Consideration shall be given to the historic nature of the columns, and to conveying historic significance to casual users through passive interpretative features.

**Recreation Units describe areas of the park with a primary emphasis on human recreational and social activity**

*Management supporting a high-quality community focal point is the top priority for the Skinner Butte summit overlook area*





Unit R1: Park Core



Unit R2: Historic Picnic Area



Unit R5: East Skinner Butte Park



Unit R6: Columns Climbing Area



Unit S1: SMJ House



Unit S5: Lincoln Yard

## Special Units (S1 - S5)

### S1: Shelton McMurphey Johnson House

Management for a historically intact, publicly accessible historic attraction and focal point for park history is the top priority for this area. The historic home and tax lot are managed and maintained through a cooperative City effort and the contracted services of the Shelton McMurphey Johnson House Associates (SMJHA). Under contract with the City of Eugene Library, Recreation and Cultural Services Department through the Planning and Development Department's Historic Preservation Program, the SMJHA is a not-for-profit organization specifically devised to manage the daily function of programming and interpretation, and organizes contracted labor and volunteer groups to maintain the house and surrounding gardens. The City of Eugene Public Works Facilities division helps maintain the infrastructure of the home and assist PDD with management of ongoing restoration work through the University of Oregon Historic Preservation Program. The City of Eugene Parks and Open Space parks maintenance operations assist with repairs to landscape infrastructure such as the irrigation system. Many other volunteer groups and individuals are also involved with the operations and programming of the house. This collaborative approach should be continued.

Special consideration should be given to this area as the "gateway" to Skinner Butte Park from the south. Collaboration with the SMJHA for park-related history, programming and volunteer coordination is a high priority. Preferred uses include recreational, social and preservation activities associated with the house and surrounding gardens. Improved access to the house from the 3rd/4th connector, and from 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue is a high priority. Purchase of the land between the house and the 3rd/4th connector through grants, donations or other collaborative means for parking and improved access is recommended. See the Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House Historical Landscape Master Plan for further suggestions currently under consideration.

### S2: Campbell Senior Center

Management to support programming and activities associated with the Campbell Senior Center (CSC) is the top priority for this area. Current uses include rental of facilities for social events, community events, diverse programming such as classes, dances and senior programming, an information center, a wood shop, bicycle, car and bus parking for staging and access to the CSC, the park and the river, and more. Preferred uses include existing and future uses related to the function of the CSC, including potential improvements or expansion of the facility within this management unit.

Preferred landscape types include irrigated, traditionally maintained lawn, shrub and perennial beds for showy floral display, scent, shade and aesthetic appeal. This area is particularly suited to botanical display of cultivated plant species for the enjoyment and engagement of seniors and local horticultural clubs, as well as to create a highly attractive, full-season floral and botanical display to serve as a backdrop for special social functions such as weddings, graduation ceremonies, retirement celebrations, anniversaries, etc.

### S3: Facility Management Division

This area should continue to be managed for use as City offices and shop facilities. This use, although not ideally compatible, provides an important presence that contributes to positive use patterns in the park. Garden areas and grounds around these offices are currently developed in a compatible way with the park, with outdoor meeting areas, native plants and natural stone. A continuation of this type of sensitive integration is a high priority. As an important transition zone from the North Skinner Butte Forest Habitat Unit and the Upland Prairie Habitat Unit to the concentrated human activity of the Park Core, preferred landscape types include irrigated semi-formal use of site-appropriate native plants for scent and floral display. Non-native ornamental plant species may be appropriate in front of the facilities buildings facing the Park Core Recreation Unit, although native plants are encouraged where their function is similar.

#### S4: Historic Community Farm

Management for community agriculture, historic interpretation, education and related recreational and community activities and events is the top priority for this area. This unit is designated for redevelopment as a key community attraction celebrating the early agricultural roots of the community, and is closely linked to the Skinner's cabin replica, the Applegate Trail Interpretive Center, interpretive management of the upland and wet prairie in the H7 Management Unit, and stormwater demonstration in the H10 Management Unit. A not-for-profit organization should be sought to develop and carry out these functions on a contractual basis, with emphasis on public benefit. Both historic and modern agricultural methods, tools and philosophy are key to the function of this area, and to the role that they play in our community and culture.

Preferred facilities include a shelter or open-air barn structure, redevelopment of the Child Care, Inc. building as a park host site, greenhouses, a produce stand, tool sheds or other storage facilities ancillary to the function of the area, a community garden, demonstration gardens, a seasonal row crop area, fruit trees, etc. as well as bicycle and car parking for access to the facilities and other park features. New or renovated facilities, including fences, gates, site furniture, lighting, etc., should reflect construction techniques and styles of early settlers as closely as possible. Facilities or ancillary functions may extend towards the underpass connection to the Owen Rose Garden (see **Implementation Plan**) to begin creating thematic continuity of agriculture and horticulture between the two areas.

#### S5: Lincoln Yard

This property has accommodated a diversity of uses (see Chapter 2) ranging from foundry buildings associated with WPA activities during the depression, to Parks Maintenance offices and shop, to the current use as storage, training area and offices for the Eugene Police Department's Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU). With the



*The historic community farm proposal is viewed as an appropriate use for the west end of the park.*

relocation of the RDU to new facilities at Roosevelt Boulevard, this property will likely be redeveloped for another use. Past uses and development have eliminated most habitat values for this area, and a combination of physical factors such as topography and the configuration of the land make it unsuitable for most recreational uses.

Although redevelopment for similar City-related facilities is an acceptable option, the preferred redevelopment uses for this area include those most compatible with the park, such as mixed use or high density residential. Commercial components of mixed use redevelopment may support park functions by providing nearby services (such as a cafe or bike rentals) for park visitors, whereby high-density residential redevelopment would be supported by the open space and recreation available in the park. Redevelopment should meet compatibility criteria as follows: buildings should be low enough to allow unobstructed views of the City and surrounding areas from Skinner Butte Loop; the redevelopment should create a pleasing transition or gateway to the park; native landscape elements should be used to blend with the habitat management areas on Skinner Butte.

**Partnering with private community organizations is one way to activate the west end of the park**



# Habitat Management Plan

## **Plan Development**

General goals and areas affected by the Habitat Management Plan were developed through the public involvement process for the overall Skinner Butte Park Master Plan. These recommendations were refined by two meetings of a combined focus group of citizen stakeholder groups, naturalists and City staff to tackle the more difficult questions of habitat and viewshed management in Skinner Butte Park. Many recommendations of this group are incorporated into this plan. Many other aspects are derived from the in-depth habitat management guidelines put forth by the Hendricks Park Forest Management Plan.

## **Intent and Application**

The Habitat Management Plan is a component of the Skinner Butte Park Master Plan that deals specifically with the preservation, restoration and maintenance of native habitats in Skinner Butte Park. Specific recommendations of the Habitat Management Plan are contained in the **Implementation Plan** section at the end of this chapter.

## **Habitat Management Units**

The Habitat Management Plan is further refined by 10 **Habitat Management Units** as described in the previous section of this chapter. Each unit describes a different habitat type with different management guidelines and restoration needs.

## **Habitat Inventory**

A detailed natural resource inventory has not been completed for Skinner Butte Park. The **Implementation Plan** calls for a survey be conducted for identified **Habitat Management Units**, and for habitat recommendations be drafted that are specific to those areas. Furthermore, significant areas of Skinner Butte Park are recommended for major restoration efforts, or conversion from traditionally maintained park areas to an approximation of suitable

native habitats such as wet prairie, upland prairie and oak savanna-prairie. This effort will require new restoration and maintenance techniques.

## **Balanced Approach**

Although preservation and restoration of natural areas in the park is among the highest priorities, Skinner Butte Park takes a broad focus on recreational needs. Specifically, natural areas must co-exist with areas of higher, concentrated activity such as the main picnic area and playground, the summit overlook area, the Campbell Senior Center, the redeveloped west end, the EWEB Reservoir, the Shelton McMurphey Johnson House, and other areas. The proposed **Management Units** for Skinner Butte Park help clarify and prioritize this mix of uses.

## **Public Access a High Priority**

Public education and the celebration of diverse native habitats near the downtown area shall be a primary goal of native habitat areas in Skinner Butte Park. The park is an excellent place to expand local awareness of native habitat values, and should be as accessible as possible for that purpose. Therefore, generally higher levels of public use must be anticipated and accommodated in native habitat areas, and it is likely that special measures will need to be taken to protect them. Such measures may include more passive interpretation and public information, as well as physical improvements such as better trails and railings to help keep visitors on trails and out of specific areas.

## **Incremental Change and Education**

Community involvement, interpretation and public outreach are seen as critical to laying the foundation for understanding, acceptance and support for managing certain habitat types. This is especially true for managing areas of Skinner Butte towards open prairie and savanna-prairie habitats. Examples might include volunteer

**Natural areas must co-exist with areas of higher development and concentrated activity in Skinner Butte Park**





Undefined trails and lack of visitor information contribute to erosion and compaction along the riverbank. A clear trail system will help habitat restoration efforts by focusing user activity in certain areas.

participation in specific projects, dissemination of information through volunteer organizations, interpretive displays in areas where work is being done, permanent interpretive displays discussing historic vegetation patterns, their function, and changes that have taken over time, tours, articles, etc.

### Plan Now but Build in Flexibility

Decisions can and should be made now that reflect current opinions and utilize current knowledge. There are several reasons for this: 1) much information on public opinion has been gathered through the Skinner Butte Park Master Plan public involvement program that supports the current approach; 2) over the next 20 or so years, there will not likely be a more extensive public process to collect this type of information than what has already been undertaken; 3) management decisions affecting natural areas are made every day and cannot wait for the possibility of a future process, and; 4) management policies will provide a base line for decision making that can be modified as knowledge and public opinion changes. Coupled with the

understanding that active management of natural areas (including the reversal of forestation in some areas, and the management towards native forest in other areas) will happen over a period of time, built-in flexibility is needed for new information to change the course or fine-tune policies set by this master planning process.

### Recognize a Dynamic System and Plan Accordingly

Similarly, natural areas will change over time. Active management will be required to maintain a certain type of habitat. Areas that are left alone will transform, through succession, into something else. Management methods explored by the Habitat Inventory should set forth acceptable levels and kinds of change, and allowance should be made for disturbance events, such as wind storms, fires, land slides and floods, that define natural systems.

### Focus on the Preservation of High Quality Habitat

It was generally understood that restoration and expansion of certain habitat types, in particular the restoration of upland prairie on Skinner Butte, will need to happen over time. It is not something that can be affected in the short-term. To begin the process, the focus should be on preserving and protecting the most valuable areas first, then the process of succession can begin to be reversed around the edges of these areas, expanding the functional habitat towards a future, desired level of coverage on the butte. This desired level is reflected in Map 7: Habitat Management Units.

### Habitat Transition Areas

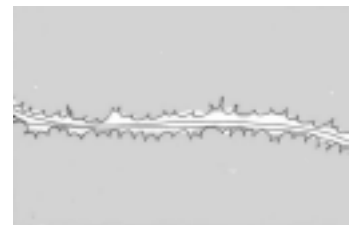
The edges of the habitat zones, for example restored upland prairie, can and should be a dynamic zone. Decisions about the actual extent of habitat types will be fine-tuned on the ground on a project-by-project basis. The general area of prairie and savanna prairie outlined by the Habitat Management Units, for example, is meant to serve as a guideline. Particular trees or specific conditions should inform the process of restoring these areas as much as possible (see "Authorization of Tree Removals," this section.



**Figure 4a - BAD Vegetation Management**  
Dense impenetrable tangle  
Low species diversity  
Mostly invasive plants  
Low visibility



**Figure 5a - BAD Trail Safety**  
Perceived danger  
More hiding places



**Figure 6a - BAD Edge Condition**  
Less edge condition  
Less species diversity  
Poor visibility



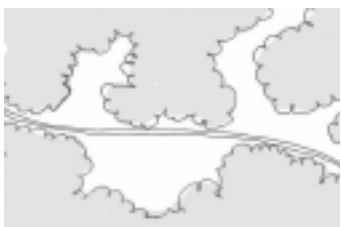
**Figure 4b - GOOD Vegetation Management**

Many layers  
High species diversity  
Few invasive plants  
Good visibility



**Figure 5b - GOOD Trail Safety**

Perceived safety  
Fewer hiding places



**Figure 6b - GOOD Edge Condition**

More edge condition  
Higher species diversity  
Improved visibility

### Edge Condition Desirable

Promoting edge conditions in habitat restoration areas is considered a compatible and desirable management technique to achieve both habitat, public safety and recreation values. Edges are known to be areas of high diversity and high wildlife value, and are also reported to be areas where wildlife viewing such as birding is most successful. Edge conditions typically describe the transition area between different habitat types such as grasslands and forest. They may also occur along roadways or trails, when fallen trees create openings in the forest, or around small groves of trees in open areas (see Figure 6).

### Invasive Species

Invasive plant species, as described in earlier chapters, are clearly the greatest threat to the health of native habitats in the park. The removal of all invasive species from habitat units is recommended. The proposed Habitat Inventory will list invasive species in the park and expand on the general approach to removal described in this plan.

### Invasive Species and Habitat Function

Despite the fact that many animal and bird species have adapted to the use of invasive plant species for forage, cover, etc., invasive species do not contribute to the overall health and diversity of a native habitat. Most migrating bird populations, for example, do not rely upon or particularly benefit from non-native sweet cherries as a source of forage due to the timing of migrations. In cases where certain species have grown locally accustomed to habitat functions of invasive species, however, that function may also be provided by combinations of site-adapted native species (native elderberry and chokecherry, for example). Therefore, the removal of all invasive species, accompanied by the encouragement or re-planting of native species serving a similar habitat function, is the favored policy where invasive species serve apparent habitat functions that are desirable long-term. It is important to note

that many areas of restored habitat, particularly where invasive species have converted one habitat type to another (for example from open, native prairie to dense brush and emerging forest) will not seek to replace the habitat function of the invasive species, but replace it with a preferred habitat function in a native ecosystem.

### Understory Vegetation and Public Safety

Public safety is one key concern related to habitat restoration, as well as vegetation management in general. Overgrown vegetation is seen as creating potential hiding places for criminals and illegal campers that poses a threat to park users. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design puts forth recommendations that include clearing dense vegetation and restricting the height of vegetation in areas used by pedestrians (paths, parking lots, restrooms, etc.). However, wholesale clearing of vegetation and height limitations are also viewed as counter to restoration efforts. Some areas of dense vegetation are required by certain species of birds and animals for cover, nesting and forage. How can this apparent conflict be resolved?

### Focus on Invasive Species Removal

By concentrating on eliminating invasive species, the question of dense understory vegetation is much simplified. English ivy, blackberry, Scot's broom, English hawthorn and others contribute greatly to an overgrown, dense and low-diversity understory in many areas in the park. Native plant communities, by comparison, tend to be relatively open, with greater species diversity as well as structural diversity - i.e. more layers and more openings (see Figure 4). By subtracting invasive species, and encouraging the natural re-growth of native plant communities, much of the affect of vegetation management for public safety reasons is achieved.

### Diverse, Open Understory for Safety

Indiscriminate removal of the forest understory is not a preferred management option for public safety (see "Promote Natural Recovery of Native Plant Communities" for related remarks).

Management towards a healthy, diverse native understory is the preferred option, where the vegetation structure is defined by multiple layers, sight lines, openings, etc. (see Figures 4 through 6). In Habitat Units, reduction of dense vegetation and maintenance of a generally clear zone between 2' and 7' in height within at least 10 feet of major trails and travel routes is recommended (Figure 5).

Clearly, good judgment must be exercised in interpreting this recommendation. The purpose of this recommendation is reduce the perception of dangerous conditions along paths and trails in the park's natural areas. Legitimate park users will be more likely to frequent these trails if they feel safe, which in turn should reduce instances of negative use.

## **Restoration Techniques**

### **The “Nudge” Approach**

The “nudge” method is the preferred overall philosophy for restoration and maintenance activities, whereby existing plant communities are moved incrementally towards a more diverse and functional native ecosystem through subtraction restoration and the addition of appropriate species. This recognizes that a purely native ecosystem can not be realistically maintained, nor can restoration occur overnight.

### **Subtraction Restoration**

Subtraction restoration is the favored approach to initiating restoration or conversion of impacted habitats. Through subtraction restoration, elements of existing habitats are slowly subtracted to achieve a desired affect. The subtraction can occur on a priority basis, for example with invasive species as the first to go. This technique is preferred for reversing the effects of succession, and allows progress to be checked while meeting goals of “soft implementation” (see **Viewshed Management Plan**).

### **Promote Natural Recovery of Native Plant Communities**

In areas where invasive species are dominant, and where conversion to upland prairie is desirable, the appearance of wholesale clearing during restoration is inevitable before dormant native species are able to become established. The “subtraction restoration” approach is not intended to prevent large areas of invasive species from being removed. However, plans should be in place at the time of removal for restoration over the short term, including erosion control. Generally, restoration experts concur that where a native ecosystem has been taken over by invasive plants, the native species return quickly once the invasive species are removed. For example, local research is showing a 75% to 80% recovery rate of native species following the removal of dense English ivy cover. Recommended methods of aiding native species recovery include planting and scattering native seed, or planting small seedlings or cuttings of site-appropriate species.

### **Bird Migration Overlay Zone**

The shape of the Upland Prairie Management Unit (H4) expands and connects the existing prairie remnants on both the east and west slopes of the butte. Since the key areas for attracting and harboring birds during their migratory routes are on the south and north slopes of the butte, these areas are to maintain a significant, native tree canopy in a roughly hourglass shape (see Figure 7)). Openings, edges, and large deciduous trees such as maple, oak and madrone contribute to the function of this area for many species of migratory birds and recreational birding. This pattern is very general, and there may be other areas of important bird habitat, or areas that may benefit from enhancement as bird habitat, outside of this overlay that need to be considered.

**Local research shows a 75% to 80% recovery rate of native plant species following the removal of dense English ivy cover**

**Figure 7:  
Bird Migration  
Overlay Zone**

*This generally illustrates the overall pattern of migratory songbird use of Skinner Butte. A substantial canopy of large native trees should be preserved in this area (in appropriate Habitat Units)*



### **Authorization for Tree Removals**

Given the detail and scope of the new land use code for tree removals, the master plan must include appropriate provisions for implementing habitat restoration. Trees are hereby authorized for removal through the Habitat Management Plan section of this master plan on an as-needed basis for restoring habitat in all Habitat Management Units. Decisions about which specific trees should remain and which should be removed will be best made on the ground during the more detailed implementation phase of restoration.

### **Implementation**

The Implementation Plan recommends specific actions related to each Habitat Management Unit, or to all Habitat Management Units. Some recommendations call for projects such as invasive species removal, tree removal from prairie restoration areas, etc., while others involve a research component, or coordination with volunteer groups and non-profit organizations. The Habitat Management section of the Implementation Plan represents the most detailed and applicable information for implementing the Habitat Management Plan. In addition to projects listed in the Implementation Plan, projects, funding and partnerships that support the intent of the Habitat Plan, or are compatible with goals outlined for a particular Management Unit, shall also be encouraged.

**Trees may be removed for habitat restoration in Habitat Units**

## **Viewshed Management Plan**

### **Plan Development**

General goals and areas affected by the Viewshed Management Plan were developed through the public involvement process for the Skinner Butte Park Master Plan. These recommendations were refined by two meetings of a combined focus group of citizen stakeholder groups, naturalists and City staff to tackle the more difficult questions of habitat and viewshed management in Skinner Butte Park. Many recommendations of this group are incorporated into this plan.

### **Intent and Application**

The Viewshed Management Plan is a component of the Skinner Butte Park Master Plan that deals specifically with the preservation, restoration and maintenance of significant views from Skinner Butte.

### **Views are a Unique Function of Skinner Butte**

Views from Skinner Butte are a unique function of the butte with a high community value. Protecting views as a unique function needs to be weighed strongly against other values that are not unique or site-specific. As a function of the trends described in Chapters 3 and 4, publicly accessible views once common to this region are increasingly threatened. It has therefore become necessary to begin considering ways to actively manage them for long-term public benefit.

### **Views Must be Considered Both Ways**

Not only are the views from the butte important, but it must be recognized that there is, currently and historically, interest in protecting the quality of the views from downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods towards the butte. Consideration must be given to restoration methods and project time lines to insure that impacts are minimal, and that positive results are readily achievable.



### **“Soft” implementation**

Restoration of views or prairie should happen slowly and carefully in conjunction with planting efforts. Implementation should happen, therefore, in a way that does not dramatically change the character of the neighborhood. This could be achieved, for example, through organizing immediate follow-through of restoration efforts where trees and other vegetation need to be removed. This would lessen the transition time and show positive results quickly. Also, taking small steps with restoration, one area at a time, would smooth the transition, build consensus around the success of small areas, and spread maintenance needs out over several years.

From a planning standpoint, preserving a “girdle” of mature trees around the base of the butte where trees currently exist would help screen roads or other features and retain the appearance of the butte from downtown and neighborhoods. The Bird Migration Overlay Zone (see Figure 7) generally achieves this effect from the south.

These recommendations apply equally to viewshed and habitat restoration, or to any other restoration project that has the potential to significantly affect the views of the butte.

### **Historic Trees**

Some trees on the butte have been planted as part of historic community events, and represent the values of the community at the time. Special consideration should be given to these trees during restoration of views and habitat areas. The importance of views from the butte and their historic (and pre-historic) cultural function as a lookout point against the intrinsic value and historic significance of certain trees will need to be carefully weighed. Clear criteria should be developed to consider these alternatives.

### **Interpretation of Changing Values**

Not only do historic trees have intrinsic value, but they are also useful for interpreting how community values change over time. The current trend towards tree preservation, and the need to balance it with other values such as views and restoration of endangered habitat, tells an interesting story that would help foster greater understanding within the community of the issues at stake. Restoration of views and habitat should address these questions through interpretation and community outreach. This applies not only to views, but to the value and changing role of certain habitat types, as well (the disappearance of savanna prairie, for example).

### **Tree Replacement**

Some trees that are removed to restore historic views may be replaced with smaller, native trees. The decision whether or not to replace a tree may be made based on the desired condition of a certain area at the time of restoration. For example, tree removal in areas for management as prairie may not be replaced. Trees in densely forested areas may also not be replaced to increase diversity in the opening left by the removal. Where savanna prairie is desired, however, or where views of the

**Community values affect the appearance of Skinner Butte**

**Figure 8: Critical Viewshed Overlay Zone**



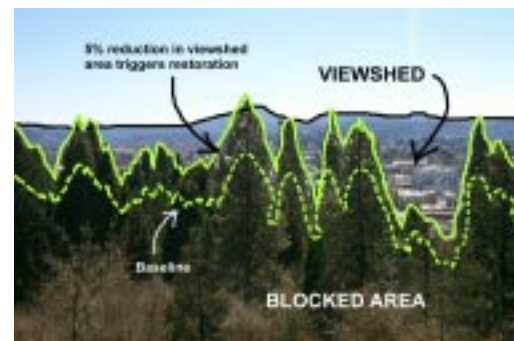
## Figure 9: Sample View Threshold

These pictures show how a baseline view might be used to determine when view restoration needs to occur.

Figure 9a could show the baseline viewshed. Figure 9b is digitally modified to show how the views might change over several years and trigger restoration efforts.



9a - Hypothetical photo of baseline view (note that actual baseline view will be taken after views are restored to approximate 1990 levels)



9b - Hypothetical photo after several years shows how a reduction in the viewshed area would trigger restoration

butte need to be protected or mitigated, appropriate native trees that are not likely to compromise the views in the future can be planted as replacements.

### Mitigating Undesirable Views

Views from and towards the butte may also be improved through mitigation of undesirable elements in the views such as power stations or other utilities, obtrusive signs, etc. Considering that some undesirable views may change in the future, however, this tool should be exercised carefully.

## Methodology

### Threshold Approach to View Restoration

This approach involves setting an objective baseline for the level to which views may be blocked before restoration occurs. It shall be quantifiable and objective, based on criteria established through the Viewshed Management Plan.

### Panoramic Views and Specific Views

Desirable panoramic views include a panorama of downtown Eugene, the south hills, the Cascades, the Coast Range and west Eugene (see Figure 8 for major panoramic viewpoints). In addition, views of specific, local features of cultural and natural interest will be listed for preservation. Specific views shall include: the Willamette River, the Three Sisters, Spencer Butte, Gillespie Butte, Willamette Street, the Hilton Hotel, the Hult Center,

Judkin's Point, the Cuthbert Amphitheater, the University of Oregon, and Autzen Stadium. This list may be updated with Parks Planning Manager approval.

### Base Line Views

An acceptable baseline for panoramic and specific view preservation shall be established at the views approximately present in 1990. This means that some restoration will need to occur now to return views to that general condition. The baseline should be established through a combination of restoration of existing general views (generally towards what would have been expected in 1990) and re-opening of specific views.

### Establishing the Base Line

A record of the baseline will be set by photographing panoramic views and specific views from significant view points (see Figure 8) and calculating the area between the tree tops and the horizon (see Figure 9). Following restoration to baseline (1990) levels, photographs will be taken from specific, fixed points (monuments) placed permanently on the butte on an annual or semi-annual basis in a consistent, prescribed manner, and compared to the baseline. The horizontal and vertical location of these monuments shall be recorded, and the cameral height above ground, angle, lens lenght and time of year shall be established and remain consistent for all future comparison.

**View preservation criteria should be quantifiable and objective**

### Restoration Threshold

Restoration efforts will be triggered when panoramic views have been blocked from baseline levels by more than 5%, or when specific views are compromised by 25% (See Figure 9).

### Preferred View Restoration Approach

The preferred approach to panoramic view restoration is for “framed views”, whereby selected trees may be removed to restore portions of the view that will return the overall view area to below the threshold level of view blockage. Through this technique, some trees will continue to grow into the view area, while others will be removed, maintaining the natural look and interest of full-crowned trees in the view foreground. Over time, the view can be managed carefully to achieve an aesthetic balance of foreground and background suitable for casual viewing or photography, painting, etc. Crown pruning is not considered an acceptable restoration tool.

### Tree Removal Authorization in the Critical Viewshed Overlay Zone

Areas where viewshed restoration will need to occur is established by the Critical Viewshed Overlay Zone (Figure 8). All trees within these zones are hereby authorized for removal through this master plan. The Critical Viewshed Overlay Zone shall only authorize tree removal specifically for the purpose of restoring significant panoramic and specific views as described herein and in accordance with the Viewshed Management Plan methodology. Restraint shall be exercised during viewshed restoration efforts to maintain an aesthetically pleasing and ecologically functional landscape within the Critical Viewshed Overlay Zone.

## Implementation Plan

### Introduction

The following Implementation Plan (attached spread sheet pages 1- 20) contains the specifics of the master plan, including policy statements, research projects, programming suggestions, maintenance recommendations and improvement projects for all aspects of the Skinner Butte Park Master Plan. These recommendations are the culmination of research, public input, review and discussion that has contributed to this plan. The Implementation Plan takes precedence over other less specific discussions and recommendation herein. Other components of the master plan (vision, policy goals, etc.) provide a framework for interpreting and applying these actions. Policies give added direction for the Implementation Plan and help clarify proposals or elements that were not considered by this planning process process.

**The Implementation Plan is a list of specific actions needed to achieve the vision**

*This painting by a local artist illustrates the cultural importance of maintaining viewsheds on Skinner Butte. Today, views of the river are nearly blocked by the trees in the foreground.*



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Advanced Marketing Research, Inc., September 2000, *Park Mail Out Survey Regarding Skinner Butte Park*, survey report for the City of Eugene
- Boyd, Robert T. *Demographic History, 1774 - 1874*. In Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7: Northwest Coast, edited by Wayne Suttles, pp. 135 - 148. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
- CH2MHILL, June 1998, *Riverbank Restoration Project*, report prepared for the City of Corvallis
- City of Eugene Parks, July 1989, *Recreation and Cultural Services, Eugene Parks and Recreation Plan*, City of Eugene
- City of Eugene Planning and Development Department, November 1991, *Downtown Core Area Historic Context Statement*, City of Eugene
- City of Eugene Planning and Development Department, 1994, *Whiteaker Plan*, neighborhood refinement plan for the City of Eugene
- City of Eugene Planning and Development Department, April 1996, *Eugene Area Historic Context Statement*, City of Eugene
- Connoly, Thomas J., February 21, 1999, *Before Eugene Skinner: The People of the Upper Willamette Valley Prior to 1846*, presented to the Lane County Historical Society
- Department of Land Conservation and Development, 1995, *Oregon's Statewide Planning Goals & Guidelines*, State of Oregon
- Donovan and Associates and Karen Mirande, September 2001, *Shelton-McMurphey-Johnson House: A Historic Landscape Master Plan*, City of Eugene Planning and Development
- Lawrence, Henry W. and Bettman, Anne P., 1982, *The Green Guide: Eugene's Natural Landscape*, Eugene, OR, A. P. Bettman



- Mackey, Harold, 1974, *The Kalapuyans: A sourcebook on the Indians of the Willamette Valley*, Mission Mill Museum, Salem, OR
- Metropolitan Civic Club, June 1967, *Development of Skinner Butte*, a research report presented to the City of Eugene
- North End Scoping Committee, July 1999, *North End Scoping Group Final Report*, City of Eugene Planning and Development
- Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, 1994, *Oregon Outdoor Recreation Plan 1994 - 1999*, State of Oregon,
- Pak, Michelle, 1998, *Crime Deterrence in Urban Parks*, thesis for the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management, University of Oregon
- Reed, David and Associates, January 2000, *Hendricks Park Forest Management Plan*, City of Eugene Public Works
- Ross, Campbell and Wilson, 1993, *The Blue Valley*, Cresswell Area Historical Society

## APPENDIX A: MAPS









## SKINNER BUTTE PARK MASTER PLAN

For more information, or to order copies of  
the Skinner Butte Park Master Plan,  
please contact:

City of Eugene  
Parks and Open Space Division  
Parks Planning  
1820 Roosevelt Blvd.  
Eugene, OR 97402

Phone: 1 (541) 682-4800  
Fax: 1 (541) 682-4882

Or visit our web site at:  
**[www.ci.eugene.or.us/pw/parks](http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/pw/parks)**

